

# ADJUSTMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS' SPOUSES

The factors influencing satisfaction and adjustment of foreign workers' spouses in Finland

Master's Thesis  
Minna Vainikka  
Aalto University School of Business  
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**Author** Minna Vainikka

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### Abstract

This Master's thesis investigates the factors that influence the cross-cultural adjustment of foreign workers' spouses in Finland. Since most organizations today operate in a global economy, an increasing number of people move away from their home country to work in another country, and many expatriates are accompanied by a spouse. Adapting to a new living environment can be challenging, and failure to adjust has negative consequences to foreign workers, their families and to the companies they work for. Previous research provides evidence that family has the greatest influence on the adaptation of expatriates in a new environment and that inability of the spouse to adapt is the most common reason for international assignment to fail.

The objective of this study is to examine the factors that influence the adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses. Further aim is to complement earlier research by investigating the ways the spouse's experiences and feelings affect the employee on an international assignment. Both positive and negative impact is considered. Finally, this research aims at identifying the forms of support organizations can provide to improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses.

This study uses qualitative approach with focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews as data collection techniques. For the purpose of this research, 17 expatriate spouses currently living in Finland due to their partner's job were interviewed either in focus group discussions or individually. In addition, three foreign workers were interviewed either at the same time with their spouse or separately. The families were of different nationalities and had different backgrounds, but all had arrived in Finland within approximately four years. All collected data was coded and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The main findings of this study show that personal and relational factors strongly affect the ability to adjust to a new environment. Open attitude and involvement in social activities are key enablers of the spouses' successful adaptation, whereas difficulties in social life and in establishing friendships have the strongest negative impact on expatriate families' adjustment. Further, according to this research a happy and well-adapted spouse improves the expatriate's performance at work and supports the worker in interactional adjustment by facilitating social activities. In addition to family members, organizations can provide essential support in adaptation to a new environment.

This study concludes that all forms of organizational support such as assistance in immigration and finding a home are valuable and influence the individual's perception of how much the organization values them. Particularly a personal destination consultant is a key enabler of successful adaptation and a central contributor to the individual's perceived feeling of being cared for. The most evident shortcomings of current forms of support are related to career assistance for spouses and help in getting involved in social activities.

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**Keywords** accompanying spouse, adjustment, cross-cultural adjustment, expatriate, expatriate family, relocation, organizational support

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**Työn nimi** Ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden puolisoiden sopeutuminen: Tekijät, jotka vaikuttavat ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden puolisoiden sopeutumiseen ja viihtyvyyteen Suomessa

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## **Tiivistelmä**

Tämä tutkielma tutkii tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden puolisoiden kulttuuriseen sopeutumiseen Suomessa. Globaalitaloudesta johtuen, yhä useampi muuttaa töihin kotimaansa ulkopuolelle, monet puolisonsa kanssa. Uuteen elinympäristöön sopeutuminen voi olla haastavaa ja sen epäonnistuessa seuraukset ovat vahingollisia niin yritykselle kuin työntekijälle ja hänen perheelleen. Aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on todistettu, että perhe vaikuttaa eniten ekspatriaattien sopeutumiseen uudessa ympäristössä ja että puolison sopeutumisvaikeudet ovat yleisin syy kansainvälisen työtehtävän epäonnistumiseen.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää tekijät, jotka vaikuttavat ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden puolisoiden sopeutumiseen ja viihtyvyyteen. Lisäksi pyrkimyksenä on täydentää aiempaa tutkimustietoa tavoista, joilla puolison kokemukset ja tunteet vaikuttavat ulkomaalaiseen työntekijään. Sekä positiivisia että negatiivisia vaikutuksia tarkastellaan. Lopulta tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää millaisilla keinoilla organisaatiot voivat parantaa puolisoiden sopeutumista ja viihtyvyyttä.

Tässä kvalitatiivisessa tutkimuksessa käytettiin tiedonkeruumenetelminä kohderyhmäkeskusteluja ja puolistrukturoituja yksilöhaastatteluja. Tutkimusta varten haastateltiin joko yksilöllisesti tai ryhmässä yhteensä 17 ulkomaalaisen työntekijän puolisoa, jotka tällä hetkellä asuvat Suomessa kumppaninsa työn vuoksi. Lisäksi haastateltiin kolmea ulkomaalaista työntekijää joko yhdessä puolison kanssa tai erikseen. Perheet edustavat useita eri kansallisuuksia ja heillä on keskenään erilaisia taustoja, mutta kaikki ovat saapuneet Suomeen noin neljä vuotta sitten. Kerätyt tiedot koodattiin ja analysoitiin teema-analyysillä.

Tutkimuksen tärkeimmät tulokset osoittavat, että henkilön omilla ominaisuuksilla ja ihmissuhteisiin liittyvillä tekijöillä on suuri merkitys uuteen ympäristöön sopeutumisessa. Etenkin avoin asenne ja osallistuminen sosiaaliseen toimintaan mahdollistavat puolison sopeutumisen. Vaikeudet sosiaalisissa suhteissa ja ystävyyksien rakentamisessa puolestaan haittaavat sopeutumista. Lisäksi tämä tutkimus todistaa, että tyytyväinen ja hyvin sopeutunut puoliso parantaa ekspatriaatin suoriutskykyä töissä sekä tukee tämän vuorovaikutuksellista sopeutumista järjestämällä sosiaalista toimintaa. Perheenjäsenten ohella myös organisaatiot voivat merkittävästi tukea uuteen ympäristöön mukautumista.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella kaikki organisaatiotuen muodot kuten apu maahantulomuodollisuuksissa ja uuden kodin etsinnässä ovat hyödyllisiä ja vaikuttavat yksilöiden kuvaan siitä kuinka paljon organisaatio arvostaa heitä. Erityisesti nimetty tukihenkilö kohteessa auttaa sopeutumisessa ja vaikuttaa keskeisesti henkilön käsitykseen siitä kuinka paljon hänestä välitetään. Merkittävimmät puutteet yritysten tällä hetkellä tarjoamissa tukipalveluissa liittyvät puolisoiden työnhakuun ja sosiaalisten suhteiden mahdollistamiseen.

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**Avainsanat** ekspatriaatti, ekspatriaattiperhe, kulttuurinen sopeutuminen, organisaatiotuki, sopeutuminen, ulkomaalaisen työntekijän puoliso, uudelleensijoittaminen

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

“I was afraid how it will go, I am alone in here, far away from home and family. So, I was scared.”

This quote is an example of how one foreign worker’s spouse felt when she had moved to Finland. And she is not alone. An increasing number of people move away from their home country to work in another country or travel with their spouse who goes for an international assignment. Adapting to a new living environment can be challenging. As a result, foreign worker’s spouse’s inability to adjust in a new location is one of the most common reasons for an international assignment to fail (Caligiuri et al. 1998).

Failure to adjust may have negative consequences to foreign workers, their families and to the companies they work for. This thesis aims at identifying and explaining the factors influencing satisfaction and adjustment of foreign workers’ spouses and providing practical implications to support the adjustment process.

This chapter first introduces the background of international assignments and the need for cross-cultural adaptation. Next, the research gap and motivation for the thesis are presented. Then the objectives and research questions of this study are stated followed by definitions of the key concepts. Finally, the description of the structure of this paper is provided in the end of this chapter.

## **1.1 Background**

Most organizations today operate in global economy. A growing number of companies enter international markets to gain competitive advantage. (Noe et al. 2008) Consequently, it is increasingly common that the location of work is outside employee’s home country. Globalization of working environment involves global sourcing, expatriation and developing global leaders. (Storey, 2009; Noe et al. 2008) As a result, Global Human Resource Management (GHMR) is becoming one of the most important issues to consider for organizations that operate in international markets. Human Resource challenges of multinational corporations include finding and selecting suitable employees, intercultural

understanding, adjustment to foreign environment and partner dissatisfaction. (Ivancevich, 2007)

Even though international assignments are essential for many companies to thrive in the global markets, it is common that they fail or are not as successful as planned. (Caligiuri et al. 1998) There are several factors influencing the success of an international business assignment such as expatriate's competences including skills, values, personal qualities and attitudes (Storey et al. 2009). However, there is empirical evidence that the family has the greatest influence on the adaptation of expatriates and thus on the success of assignments (Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007).

There were around 50.5 million expatriates worldwide in 2013 of which 73.6% were classified as individual workers. Non-employed spouses and children made up 12.8% of the expatriate population (Finaccord, 2014) According to different consultancies, about 60-80% of expatriates are accompanied by a spouse or partner. Global Relocation Trends Survey conducted by Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2012) found that 81% of international assignees were accompanied by spouses whereas GMAC (2006) and Mercer Human Resource Consulting (2006) ended up in 60 per cent (ref. in Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). All in all, a large number of expatriates have their spouse with them on international assignments which leads to the importance of taking family aspects into consideration. Expatriates with families encounter more challenges than those moving alone, but they also have more capabilities and resources than single expatriates (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

From the perspective of both worker and his or her spouse, employment in a foreign country causes a major change. Before the relocation, the family has commonly lived a comfortable life surrounded by friends, relatives and colleagues. Due to the assignment, they have to leave their home, the familiar work and children's school and start a new life in a new environment. The change may include altering the role of the spouse from a working husband or wife to a stay-at-home-spouse and probably the whole social network is left to the previous home country. The family has to begin a new kind of life in a new environment and different culture which all require adaptation. Thus satisfaction and adjustment of the spouse are important factors to consider for HRM. In fact, they are vital since one of the most common reasons for international assignments to fail, or turning out less successful as



planned, is foreign workers' and their spouses' inability to adjust in a foreign location (Caligiuri et al. 1998).

To conclude, this study firstly follows the assumption made by several researchers that the degree of expatriates' adjustment affects the success of an assignment (e.g. Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Waxin, 2004; Tung 1981) and secondly, that the adjustment of expatriate family is critical to the success of expatriate assignment in a foreign location (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Andreason, 2003). The aim of this thesis is to investigate the factors that influence the adjustment of foreign workers' spouses.

## **1.2 Research gap and motivation for the thesis**

Failures of international assignments are common and expensive. The direct monetary costs of failed expatriate assignments to U.S. companies amounted to 4.5 billion USD per year in 2009. Also the indirect monetary and intangible costs of failure are large both to companies and to individual employees and their families. Failures in international assignments can lead to business disruptions or lost opportunities and harm the company's reputation. At a personal level, failed assignments can cause spoiled career reputation, decreased self-confidence, financial difficulties and problems in marriage and with children. (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2010)

Due to the high failure rates and the costs related to sending expatriates to foreign assignments, much of the literature has focused on human resource management practices that can assist companies in selecting, developing and retaining competent expatriates (Pucik and Saba, 1998 ref. in Storey et al. 2009). In addition there is a considerable amount of research done on expatriates, much of which concentrates on the competencies the employees on international assignments should have (Storey et al. 2009). Furthermore, a lot of studies have been conducted to understand expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Dowling, Welch, & Schuler, 1999). However, most of the studies focus on the foreign worker and there is little research that looks the adjustment process related to international assignments from spouse's point of view (Takeuchi et al. 2002).

Similarly, Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) reaffirm that there is a large amount of research done on expatriates' adjustment in foreign cultures, but the focus has been on the worker. Family members and family dynamics are not investigated in most of the studies. However, there are researchers that have begun to investigate the influence spouses' adjustment has on expatriates (Takeuchi et al. 2002) and there are several studies that indicate that spouses and their experiences are of high importance to the success of the expatriate process (Punnett 1997). According to these studies (e.g. Tung 1981; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Andreason, 2003) spouse and family issues related to adjustment are primary factors for assignment failures.

Already Tung (1981) provided evidence for the statement that a major problem related to overseas assignments is the inability of expatriate's spouse to adjust. According to her research "the inability of the manager's spouse to adjust to a different physical or cultural environment" is the number one reason for international assignment to fail (Tung, 1981, 76). Similarly Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) conclude that the adjustment of the expatriate's spouse has significant impact on the adjustment of the employee on international assignment. Their study show that several non-work related factors influence adjustment.

In addition, Andreason (2008) states that spouse is the key for international assignment to succeed or fail. He suggests that expatriate's spouse has a more difficult role in a new situation than the other family members while he or she is usually more immersed in the new culture. Thus, also Andreason (2008) confirms that the single most common reason for international assignment to fail is the inability or unwillingness of the spouse to adapt. Particularly, Caligiuri et al. (1998) have shown that family characteristics have an important role in the adjustment process and that spouse's cross-cultural adjustment has impact on expatriate's adjustment. The study extended that family support, family communication and family adaptability are related to expatriates' adjustment in a new environment.

Further, Takeuchi et al. (2002) have investigated the influence of spouses' and expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment on the outcomes of foreign assignments. They examined the crossover and spillover effects facilitating the impact. Based on their research, it was concluded that the influence the spouse's adjustment and the adjustment of the expatriate have on each other is strong. In addition, the findings of their study show that adjustment is related to satisfaction and strengthens the intentions to stay at the assignment. (Takeuchi et al. 2002)

To conclude, the existing literature provides evidence that spouse plays an important role in adjustment process. The main objective of this research is to extend and build on previous research by investigating foreign workers' spouses and expatriates themselves willing to talk about their personal experiences and family relationships. So first, this thesis has academic relevance. The primary aim is to reach a comprehensive understanding of the adjustment of foreign workers' spouses. It is also attempted to increase the knowledge about the spouses' effects on business expatriates, including both positive and negative impact they have on the success of the assignment. Most of the earlier research has focused on the negative role of the spouse and the family as a resource has received less interest among researchers (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

Furthermore, most of the earlier studies on expatriates focus on North American companies (Collings et al. 2007) and usually include one type of expatriates, those who are sent abroad by their employer to work in a subsidiary in another country. In this study, as diverse set of nationalities as possible is aimed at and the types of expatriates include the ones who have been headhunted to work in Finland because of their unique knowledge and/or skills and those who have searched for work in Finland themselves as well as those who are on a long assignment sent by their employers or permanently employed in Finland. However, the context of this thesis is limited to Finland. Several factors that influence satisfaction and adjustment are culture specific and thus vary according to the location of the assignment.

Hardly any of the existing expatriate adjustment literature concentrates on the Finnish context. However, Tixier (1996) has studied the cultural differences that expatriate managers need to adapt themselves in the Nordic countries including Finland in her research. She has investigated the main features of national managerial cultures and modes of communication. Also Routamaa, Hautala & Tsutzuki (2010) have studied managing intercultural differences in Finland and Japan focusing on the role of personality in the expatriate's adjustment to a new culture. In addition, Yijälä, Lönnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti & Verkasalo (2012) have examined anticipated socio-cultural adaptation among potential migrants from Russia to Finland. Despite the existing literature, the factors influencing satisfaction and adjustment remain understudied in the Finnish context. Thus the aim of this study is to provide new knowledge of the adjustment of spouses and more specifically in the Finnish context.

Second, in addition to academic relevance, this thesis has practical business relevance. The research is conducted as a response to a request from Finland Relocation Services Oy Ab Ltd (later referred as FRS) to study spousal adjustment in Finland. FRS operates in the field of relocation, immigration and international mobility consulting. Its services include comprehensive help and support when moving into a new country, such as organizing pre-visits, arranging accommodation, assistance in identifying best suited school and daycare options as well as spousal and family support (Finland Relocation Services, 2016). The company indicated that in addition to empirical data they would like to get scientifically sound information about the factors contributing to the wellbeing of foreign workers' spouses in Finland. According to Andreason (2003) there is little information about the relocation support in the literature either, despite the fact that it can significantly reduce expatriate failure. Thus, this information would be valuable for FRS when offering their services to their clients, which are typically companies' HR personnel. In a broader context, the results of this study have practical relevance also for businesses in Finland that have foreign workers.

Third, this thesis has societal implications as it aims at identifying the elements which contribute to adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers and their spouses. With this information the attraction and retention of international talent could be improved as well as workforce diversity increased.

### **1.3 Research objectives and questions**

To fill the research gap and to investigate and understand the problem described, the purpose of this research is to study the adaptation of foreign workers' spouses in the Finnish cultural setting. In other words, the principal aim is to examine the factors that influence the adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses in Finland. Further aim is to complement earlier research by investigating the ways the adaptation and satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the spouse affects the employee on an international assignment.

The research problem is addressed from spouse's perspective. It focuses on discovering foreign workers' spouses' perceptions and experiences related to the international assignment. The effect spouse's experiences and feelings have on the working partner are

studied from both spouse's and worker's perspective, but the main emphasis is on the spouse's viewpoint. Hence the research focuses on investigating spouses' thoughts and feelings related to adjustment in Finnish culture and a new life situation.

This thesis will give a representation of how 17 expatriate families from different nationalities adjusted to their life in Finland. What kind of challenges they faced, how did they overcome the difficulties and what kind of services and support helped them in the adjustment process. Also positive elements and success factors related to the new life situation will be investigated.

Accordingly, this thesis aims at answering the following research questions:

- 1) What kind of factors influence adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses in Finland?
- 2) How do the adjustment and satisfaction / dissatisfaction of the spouse affect the adjustment and satisfaction of the foreign worker?
- 3) What forms of support can organizations provide to improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses?

For the purpose of this research, 17 expatriate spouses currently living in Finland due to their partner's job were interviewed. 14 of the spouses participated in two separate focus group discussions and 4 were interviewed individually. One of the spouses participated both in the focus group discussion and in the individual interview. Three foreign workers were interviewed either at the same time with their spouse or separately. The families were from different nationalities and had different backgrounds, but all had arrived in Finland within approximately four years.

## **1.4 Definition of key concepts**

Brief definitions of the key terms used in this thesis are provided next. The definitions will be expanded and described in more detail throughout the thesis, particularly in the literature review.

### Foreign worker

Expatriate and foreign worker are used interchangeably in this study to mean a person who works in a country other than his or her original home country. Expatriate is “a citizen of one country living and working in another country” (Gomez-Mejia et al. 2010, 569) Most expatriates stay in a foreign country for a planned period of time, but some never return to their country of citizenship (Business Dictionary, 2006). This study includes several types of expatriates: the ones who have been headhunted to work in Finland because of their unique talent and those who have searched for work in Finland themselves as well as those who are on a long assignment sent by their employers. The common factor for all expatriates in this research is that they have moved to Finland within four years before they participated in this study.

### International assignment

A work assignment that takes place in another country than employee's country of citizenship. In this thesis the term international assignment refers to long term assignments, which according to Storey (2007, 226) involve the relocation of an employee and his or her family to different country for a period of one to five years. Also permanent international contracts fall into this category.

### Accompanying spouse

A person who follows his or her life partner, married or unmarried, to another country because of the partner's work assignment. Also the term trailing spouse is used in the literature. (Harvey, 1995; World of Expats, 2016)

### Adjustment

Adjustment is defined by Caligiuri et al. (1998, 598) “the extent to which expatriates feel comfortable and adapted to living in their host country”. Adjustment, adaptation, and acculturation are used interchangeably to mean the process and result of change where individuals become familiar with a foreign cultural environment (Haslberger & Brewster,

2008). Cross-cultural adjustment consists of three dimensions: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment (Black & Stephens, 1989).

### Organizational support

Organizational support refers to the services offered by employers and relocation service providers which aim at effecting positively on expatriate and spousal adjustment. Support can be direct or indirect. Direct support includes e.g. finding housing for expatriate families, registering them to a new country and explaining local practices in handling everyday chores such as grocery shopping. Indirect support means e.g. encouraging expatriates and their spouses to get involved in local communities or hobbies. (Andreason, 2003)

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. In this introductory chapter, background for the study, research gap and purpose of the study are described and research questions identified. Definitions of the key concepts are also included in this first chapter.

In chapter two, the relevant literature is presented. The chapter begins with an introduction to the success and failure factors of international assignments. Next, theories of three related areas will be discussed: first theory of adjustment including its different dimensions, second theories about how the adjustment of one family member effects other members and third theory of organizational support. Finally, the theoretical framework for this study is defined.

In the third chapter, the methodology of this study is described. The chapter begins with a description of the research context. Next, sampling decisions and data collection are explained followed by analysis and interpretation and last trustworthiness and limitations of the study are considered.

In Chapter four, the findings from the interviews and focus group discussions are presented. In chapter five, the central findings are compared to the existing literature covered in chapter two and finally, in chapter six, practical implications are provided as well as suggestions for further research offered.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Success and failure factors of international assignments

International assignments are essential and important for many companies. However, it is common that they fail or are not as successful as planned. (Caligiuri et al. 1998) The criteria used to evaluate expatriate success include cross-cultural adjustment, completion or premature end of the assignment and performance at business assignment (Caligiuri, 2000). Premature end of the assignment can be a consequence of poor work performance and/or personal problems (Forster, 1997).

Undoubtedly, the selection and managing the expatriates is a complex and demanding task. The employees' success at work in their home country does not predict the success at foreign assignment. Neither is it straightforward to list the factors related to the success of foreign assignments and further, those elements are hard to measure or test. (Ivancevich, 2007) However, Ivancevich (2007) has listed the characteristics related to expatriates' success and failure. The listed factors concern the selection of an expatriate and are not necessarily equivalent with the success and failure factors while on assignment. However they provide relevant insight as predictive factors. The findings are summarized in table 1: Factors related to expatriate success and failure.

Success factors	Failure factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good technical skills</li><li>• Language skills</li><li>• Motivation to work abroad</li><li>• Knowledge of the culture at the destination</li><li>• Well-adjusted family</li><li>• Support from the spouse</li><li>• Behavioral flexibility</li><li>• Adaptability and open-mindedness</li><li>• Good relationship skills</li><li>• Good stress management skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate technical skills</li><li>• Weak language skills</li><li>• Doubtful about moving abroad</li><li>• Unwillingness to learn about the foreign culture</li><li>• Family problems</li><li>• Low support from the spouse</li><li>• Inflexible behavior</li><li>• Un-adaptability</li><li>• Poor relationship skills</li><li>• Weak stress management skills</li></ul>

**Table 1: Factors related to expatriate success and failure** (Modified from Ivancevich, 2007, 104)



Further success factors relate to the qualities associated with global leadership. Companies need global leaders to pursue global strategies and to be successful in the global markets. The ideal global leaders approach business with global mindset and are capable of handling complexity and uncertainty. They should be flexible and adaptable by nature. (Storey et al. 2009) Early research (e.g. Hays, 1974 ref. in Storey et al. 2009, 412) concentrates on employees' competencies needed in the different roles related to their international business assignments. The qualities and competences needed for successful completion of the foreign assignment are categorized according to the types of assignments, such as solving a technical problem or overseeing an international operation. (Hays, 1974 ref. in Storey et al. 2009, 412) Later research on expatriate success also emphasizes expatriates competences including skills, values, personal qualities and attitudes. (Storey et al. 2009)

There is some research about success and failure factors that influence during assignments. According to Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2012), Global Relocation Trends 2012 Survey, the most significant reasons for assignment failures are related to either career or family. Expatriates leaving their assignment position to work at a more attractive job in another company was the most common reason for the career based assignment failures. Likewise, dissatisfaction of the spouse was the most cited reason for family related failures followed by other family issues. According to Ivancevich (2007), there is empirical evidence that the family affects most to the adaptation of expatriates in a new environment and thus to the success of the assignment. In Global Relocation Trends 2012 Survey, the most critical family related challenges named by the employers are expatriate's spouse's resistance to relocation, adjustment of the family and children's education. Similarly, the expatriate candidates, who turn down an international assignment name family concerns, spouse's career, inadequate compensation and employee career related issues as the most critical factors. Further, the most common reasons for early termination of assignments are family concerns. (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012)

The factors leading to assignment failure found in Global Relocation Trends 2012 Survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012) are listed in table 2.

<b>Cause of assignment failure</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
Employee leaves to work for another company	19%
Spouse dissatisfaction	17%
Other family concerns	11%
Job does not meet expectations	10%
Inability to adapt to host location	10%
Inadequate job performance	10%
Poor candidate selection	8%
Poor management of assignee	4%
Quality of life in host country	3%
Security and safety concerns	3%
Dissatisfaction with remuneration	2%
other	3%

**Table 2: Factors leading to assignment failure** (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2012, 63)

As the brief review on the research about foreign assignments show, the family related issues provide the most common explanation to failures. Also, the cross-cultural adjustment of both expatriates and spouses has major impact on the intentions to continue a foreign assignment (Takeuchi et al. 2002). Many other causes for assignment failures are likely to be somehow related to adjustment as well such as inadequate performance at work, family concerns and quality of life. Thus adjustment will be discussed next covering its different dimensions and listing the factors influencing adjustment.

## **2.2 Adjustment in foreign location**

Managing cross-cultural adjustment process is undoubtedly an important and challenging task for the human resource management of an international company for many reasons. First, because of the high costs related to it. In the beginning of the assignment, it takes time for an employee to learn the new role, adapt to a new environment and to operate effectively. However, the compensation paid for the employee is not reduced for this adjustment and learning period. Thus, the longer the adjustment period lasts, the higher the costs will be for the organization. Moreover, if the employee fails to adjust completely, the costs can be considerably high. Second, adjustment impacts performance at work. (Black & Stephens,

1989) Third, there is a large amount of countries and cultures where the global companies operate. Fourth, the number of foreign nationals appointed to manage the operations is increasing and they commonly have difficulties in adjusting to their new environment (Ivancevich, 2007) and finally, the cross-cultural adjustment is a multifaceted and complex process (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).

One of the most commonly used theory of cross-cultural adjustment is the U-Curve theory (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). According to the theory, moving to a foreign country can create a foreseeable sequence of reactions to unfamiliar environment (Ivancevich, 2007). In the beginning, the new culture usually causes mainly positive reactions. The features of the new environment and situation are seen interesting and absorbing. But the positive beginning is followed by a period called culture shock. While a person is constantly surrounded and confronted by the unfamiliar environment, feelings of frustration and confusion emerge. The person finds it difficult to perform normally in a strange context. Finally, the person learns to perform effectively in the new environment and adapts to the foreign culture. At this stage the person is able to live normal life and has, in other words, adjusted to the new location. (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Ivancevich, 2007) Despite the popularity of the U-Curve theory, there is no comprehensive empirical literature related to the theory. It has been partially supported, but other patterns of adjustment have also been found such as J-curve and upward linear models. In the linear pattern there is no honeymoon period in the beginning. It only refers to gradual adjustment over time. (Black & Mendenhall, 1991)

The end result of successful adjustment is psychological well-being (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008), where adjustment means the degree to which a person feels comfortable and adapted to living in a foreign country (Caligiuri et al. 1998). In other words, cross-cultural adjustment refers to the extent of psychological comfort and familiarity that the person has for the new environment (Black, 1990 ref. in Takeuchi et al. 2002). The concepts of adjustment, adaptation, and acculturation are used interchangeably. They all describe the change process where individuals become familiar with a foreign cultural environment (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) and start to feel that they are able to live a normal life in a new situation. Successful adjustment also means combining the elements from the culture of one's original home country and those of the new culture (Kim, 1988). However, the adjustment process is not simple nor straightforward. It involves individual's behavior, cognitions and emotions (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). According to earlier research, cross-cultural adjustment is a

complex, challenging, difficult and multidimensional process (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). The different dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment will be described next.

### **2.2.1 Dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment**

Cross-cultural adjustment has several dimensions, from three to five commonly cited in the literature. The division to different dimensions is justified by the assumption that individuals have different roles related to different parts of their lives (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). A person may be for example executive at work, but have a dominant spouse at home. At the same time that person may be involved in the hobbies of his / her children or engage in other free-time activities. According to Black & Stephens (1989) cross-cultural adjustment consists of three dimensions: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment. For the spouses who do not work over the period of time they spend in a foreign location, the first two forms of adjustment apply: general and interactional adjustment. However, these two have an impact on all the three dimensions of expatriate's adjustment. (Black & Stephens, 1989)

Another way to define the dimensions is the five-dimensional model of cross-cultural adjustment by Cerny and Smith (2007) (ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). The five dimensions are: organizational, cultural, relational, psychological and personal. Organizational dimension refers to work-related aspects and includes similar factors as work adjustment dimension of Black & Stephens (1989). Cultural dimension consists of intercultural aspects and relational includes factors related to relationship with family and friends. Psychological dimension covers cognitive and emotional resources and skills whereas the personal dimension refers to individual's resourcefulness in regards to components like spiritual life and habits. (Cerny et al. 2008 ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

A third model of dividing adjustment in different dimensions is published by Navas, Rojas, García and Pumares, (2007). They present seven domains of acculturation: political, work, economic, family, social relations, religious beliefs and customs and finally the ways of thinking which includes principles and values. According to the model, there is no general acculturation attitude, but different strategies and attitudes in different areas. Navas et al. (2007) suggest that foreigners tend to maintain their own culture in the core or intermediate

areas like family, religion and social relations and don't adopt the customs of the new location related to these domains. However in more peripheral or public areas of the culture such as political, work or economic, the foreigners are willing to integrate in the new culture since the adoption of these elements is considered more important to survive in the new environment. (Navas et al. 2007)

The three-dimensional model of Black & Stephens (1989) is used in this study, but it is complemented by the findings of Navas et al. 2007 and Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) when applicable. Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) found that of the ten stressors used in their study, cultural, relational and occupational stress had the strongest influence on the expatriate families' adjustment process which supports the use of the three-dimensional model of Black & Stephens (1989). These three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment are described next.

#### General adjustment

General dimension of cross-cultural adjustment refers to the adaptation to and familiarity with the common features of the new environment (Takeuchi et al. 2002). These features include e.g. food, weather, housing and health care (Black & Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi et al. 2002). Usually, the novelty of the culture is associated with these features and it is one of the most common non-work factor that has influence on the adjustment (Black & Stephens, 1989). Consequently, some cultures are more challenging to adapt to than others (Black et al. 1991).

#### Interactional adjustment

Interaction refers to verbal and non-verbal communication with the host country nationals. There can be major differences in the ways of communication between different cultures. (Black & Stephens, 1989) Thus, the interactional dimension of cross-cultural adjustment deals with person's psychological comfort related to communication differences when interacting with the local people of a foreign country (Takeuchi et al. 2002). When assessing adjustment, it is relevant to consider how much a person interacts with host country nationals as well as how he or she has adapted to the local communication customs. According to

Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) picking up on the foreign language and being understood by the locals of the foreign country are the most difficult aspects.

According to Black, Morrison and Gregersen (1999 ref. in Storey et al. 2009, 412) successful expatriates place effort in interacting with local residents of the country in which they have relocated. They like to communicate with the locals and practice their skills in the local language as well as try different habits and customs typical to that culture. Further, they prefer to establish friendships and social ties also with local people and not to be solely surrounded by other expatriates. (Storey et al. 2009) Similarly, the findings of Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) highlight the importance of relationships. Several participants in their study mentioned the difficulties in making new friends, establishing close and deeper friendships as well as challenges in keeping touch with the family and old friends back home.

Interactional adjustment is relevant for both expatriates and spouses. According to Black & Stephens (1989) the interactional adjustment of the spouse is related to the interactional adjustment of the expatriate, but also to the expatriate's intentions to continue with the assignment.

### Work adjustment

The work dimension of cross-cultural adjustment refers to the level of psychological comfort an employee feels with various features related to work (Takeuchi et al. 2002). Even though the premature end of a foreign assignment is not the same as general employee turnover, there are similarities in the reasons behind the intentions to stay or leave a job. These include e.g. organizational commitment and work satisfaction both of which reduce the intentions to leave. (Black & Stephens, 1989) According to the study of Black & Stephens (1989), most expatriates were fairly well adjusted to their work. This may be a result of the employees focusing their attention to the similarities of the current and previous work and not to the differences between the cultures.

### **2.2.2 Factors influencing adjustment**

Moving abroad sets off additional demands on expatriates and their families and several variables constitute these demands (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). The factors which

influence adjustment include both work related and other than work-related elements (Black & Stephens, 1989). Many elements have been studied in earlier research from the features of expatriate's job to food, weather and cultural values. Clearly, the fundamental factor is the expatriate's new job. It is the reason why the family moves abroad. At the same time many incidents happen that require adaptation and have influence on it. These can include for example the spouse giving up a job, children changing to a new school, start living in a new home and change in routines etc. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) In the following, different factors influencing adjustment including organizational factors, general and cultural factors as well as personal and relational factors are first listed in Table 3 and then discussed in more detail.

<b>Organizational factors</b>	<b>General and Cultural factors</b>	<b>Personal and relational factors</b>
Role clarity/conflict	Food	Personal characteristics
Occupational stress	Weather	Motivation
Work performance	Housing	Values
Organizational culture	Healthcare	Interaction
Financial issues	Local language	Friends
Organizational support	Local ways to behave	Family issues
Unemployment of the spouse	Local ways to interact	Health issues

**Table 3. Factors influencing adjustment**

#### Organizational factors

Expatriate's new job is the underlying factor related to adjustment which causes the relocation in the first place (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Consequently several types of adjustment factors are connected to the expatriate's work. However, organizational factors here refer to specifically work related factors and organizational support offered for the family. Employment status of the spouse will be discussed in this category as well. The organizational factors affect expatriates and the spouses who work whereas if the spouse does not work, the lack of organizational dimension may impact adjustment.

Several work related factors either decrease or increase uncertainty and thus either help in the adjustment process or make it more difficult. Unclear and new role at the job as well as

role conflict are examples of the elements that prevent adjustment whereas clear perception of one's role and pre-departure knowledge about the new environment ease the adaptation. (Black & Stephens, 1989) CernySmith Adjustment Index (CSAI) includes occupational stress meaning pressures at work and organizational stress referring to organizational and team issues complicating adjustment (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). In addition, the employee and/or the employer may be dissatisfied with work performance (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Further, the novelty of organizational culture in the host country influences adjustment. The more the organizational culture in the new position differs from the organization in the home country or previous location, the more challenging the adjustment process will be. (Black et al. 1991)

According to the research made by Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012), several expatriates experienced organizational and occupational stress due to company's reorganization. They were worried about the stability of their job as well as insecure about their value in the company. Also, many expatriates had difficulties in interaction with their superior and subordinates at the new job. These experiences further affected strongly to their adjustment at home. In addition to the expatriates, many spouses mentioned the stress their working partner had felt. Further job related factor is the compensation and other financial issues. Accepting an international assignment nearly always results in changes in financial state and affairs of the expatriate family. Even though the employee's income usually increases due to the assignment abroad and some support is provided to cover the additional living costs, there commonly is also a loss of income due to the unemployment of the spouse. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

Interruption in his / her own career is one of the major causes for dissatisfaction of the spouse during international relocation. If the spouse does not work during the stay in a foreign country, it often leads to other problems in addition to break in his or her career. Without co-workers, the spouse may feel isolated, especially in a culture that is very different from the familiar culture at home (Black & Stephens, 1989). According to Cole (2011) the spouses who interrupt their career because of the international assignment experience lower interactional adjustment than those who continue working. In addition, Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) found that many spouses are unclear about their role because they don't have a professional identity and have not formed a new family identity. Many spouses express that the interruption or loss of their career causes problems at home.



Similarly, Haslberger & Brewster (2008) point out the more difficult situation of the spouse compared to the expatriate. The new role of the spouse is less structured and often less supported while the expatriate usually has an established working environment including support. The spouses who give up their career and don't get a job while on assignment can have too much to do at first because of the new culture, language and setting up a new family life, but after settling in they may feel bored and have too much time without knowing how to spend it.

Organizations offer compensation packages to help in adapting to the changed financial situation, but other forms of support can be considered at least equally important in adjustment process (Ivancevich, 2007). The forms of organizational support are discussed in more detail later in chapter 2.4 Organizational support. However, one essential result of support is the feeling of being cared for which is not always accomplished. Before the assignment, it is common that the spouse is ignored in the selection process of the expatriate. Further, the spouses don't usually receive any cross-cultural training before starting a new life in a foreign country. In addition, it is common that the relocation follows soon after the decision to move because of the work assignment abroad leaving a short time to prepare for the change. (Black & Stephens, 1989)

### General and cultural factors

General and cultural factors refer to the common features of the new environment such as food, weather, housing and health care (Black & Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi et al. 2002), but also to the ways to behave and interact in the culture in question. Similarly, Harrison and Shaffer (2001, ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012, 63) point out three factors that affect spouses' adjustment. These involve first the spouse's relationships with the locals of the new country, second the adaptation to local customs and third how well the spouse feels at home in the new environment.

Some cultures are perceived more challenging to adapt to than others (Black et al. 1991). According to Black & Stephens (1989) novelty of the culture to which a person has moved is one of the most common non-work factor that influences adjustment. In CernySmith Adjustment Index (CSAI) cultural stress is defined by "Getting needs met in new ways"

(Rosenbusch & Cseh 2012, 67). The more the culture at the destination differs from that of one's home country the more insecurity the person feels about how to behave and cope in the foreign environment which leads to difficulties in adaptation. This is problematic especially for the spouse who can feel isolated without colleagues and work community. (Black & Stephens, 1989) However, as Yijälä et al. (2012) point out, there are also studies that have not confirmed the link between cultural distance and adaptation (e.g. Tung, 1998), but successful adaptation is more likely achieved because of the person's ability to fit into the new culture. Thus personal factors influencing adjustment are discussed next.

### Personal and relational factors

In addition to the work and context related factors, also the characteristics and abilities of the individual contribute to adjustment. Person's attitudinal qualities e.g. tolerance for ambiguity and desire to communicate as well as attitudes towards other cultures have an influence on the adjustment in a foreign environment. Previous international experience as well as the person's level and quality of motivation also have an important role in the adjustment process. All of these individual specific features influence living and working in another culture than one's own. (Black & Stephens, 1989)

It is important to note as well that not all individuals who move to other countries have similar values as their average co-nationals (Yijälä et al., 2012). In fact they may have the motivation to relocate because the values at the destination are different from their home country, but similar to their own personal values (Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001). The similarity of the values of the individuals and those of the majority of the people at the new location reduces the difficulties in adaptation to a new society (Yijälä et al., 2012). In addition, many of the expatriate's characteristics and capabilities can be seen as personal resources influencing the adjustment process and its outcome. Also, the personal resources of family members and the family itself as a resource are important in the adaptation and impact on the success of the assignment. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008)

Family can be seen as a resource in the adjustment process due to its several features such as cohesion, adaptability, organization and structure, and its communication skills. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) On the other hand, the accompanying family brings additional challenges. Family members may be unhappy about their own changed role or

how the other family members behave in the new situation. The relocation can lead to many changes in the family, for example the spouse giving up the career, children going to a new school and changes in routines related to everyday-life (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Further, family-related factors include stress and negative feelings caused by living far away from the family members and friends back home. Especially, aging parents cause major concern for many. In addition, the lack of available time to be spent together with the partner is ranked as a significant problem. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

Consequently, according to several studies (e.g. Tung 1981; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Andreason, 2003) spouse and family issues related to adjustment are primary factors for assignment failures. The school system in the foreign location can differ a lot from the one the children are used to in regards to e.g. the structure of the learning experience and how the schoolchildren are rewarded (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). The change of school results in many other changes as well such as losing old friends and the need to establish new friendships, hobbies and other free-time activities. However, the children's lives in the new environment are usually considered relevantly structured with support available from the school or daycare (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) whereas the expatriate's spouse is considered to have a more difficult role in the new situation than the other family members (Andreason, 2008). Consequently, the inability of the spouse to adjust in the foreign environment is a significant reason for the deficiencies in the expatriate's adjustment (Tung, 1981) and according to Caligiuri et al. (1998) it is one of the most common reasons for international assignment to fail.

## **2.3 The effect spouse's adjustment has on the foreign worker**

As already stated, the adjustment of expatriate's spouse has major impact on the adjustment of the employee on international assignment. Black & Stephens (1989) examined the relationship between the expatriate's adjustment and the spouse's adjustment and confirmed that the adjustment of the spouse correlates strongly to the adjustment of the expatriate. Also, the adjustment of both the expatriate and the spouse have impact on the intentions to continue the foreign assignment. (Takeuchi et al. 2002)

The role of the spouse is significant to the success of an international assignment. When the spouse adjusts well in a foreign environment, it has a positive effect on expatriate's performance. (Ivancevich, 2007) On the contrary, the spouse's inability to adjust commonly creates conflict and leads to a failure of the expatriate assignment (Harvey, 1995). To explain the mechanism of this impact, three theories will be used in this study: family systems theory and crossover and spillover effects.

### **2.3.1 Family system theory**

Family systems theory offers a framework to explain the social dynamics in a family (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). It perceives the family as one entity, an organized system. Family members contribute to the system and are dependent on each other. They are components in a process that establishes and sustains behavioral patterns. (Minuchin, 1985). According to Minuchin (1985, 2) "Patterns in a system are circular rather than linear." In other words, the interaction in the family occurs in cycles. The behavior of one family member affects the other members and again their reaction and feedback have influence on the initial behavior of that one family member. And this spiral of interaction is continuous.

Family systems are not closed, but open for external influence. Thus both internal and external factors impact both the individual members of the family as well as the family as a whole. (Broderick 1993, ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012, 65) Family systems also process information by changing knowledge and opinions between family members (Kantor & Lehr, 1975, ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012, 65) In addition, family systems are considered adaptive. They accommodate according to the changes they face. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) However, the adaptability may occur only in one environmental context and not necessarily in others. Thus, adjustment in another society than the one at the family's home country is not certain. (Wedemeyer & Grotevant, 1982, ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012, 65)

Family systems theory has been used to understand the cross-cultural adjustment process. Caligiuri et al. (1998) base their research on this theory to show that family characteristics including family support, family communication and family adaptability have significant influence on expatriates' adjustment process in a new environment. They also provide

evidence to the statement that the families who see the moving abroad positively adjust better to the new environment than those families who perceive the relocation negatively. Further, the families, who have negative perception need more coping characteristics to be able to adjust than the families who view the move positively. In line with the family systems theory Caligiuri et al. (1998) suggest that a combination of three types of factors impact families' cross-cultural adjustment. These are, first the global assignment itself, second the family characteristics including support and communication and third the family's perception of international relocation.

Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) have also made conclusions supporting family systems theory. One of their findings, deals with the difficulties related to individual family members to understand their roles. Not only the expatriate is anxious about the work role, but the perceived instability affects all family members and makes the definition of their roles more challenging. Another finding is that the expatriates feel that it is their responsibility to help the other members of the family to adjust in the new environment. Following the circular pattern of interaction, the spouses in turn, strive to support their children in the adjustment process. Finally, adjustment is easier to families who express their opinions to each other which is in line with the view of the family as an information processing system. It is essential for all family members to stay connected as a family. In addition helping and listening to each other is considered important. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) All in all, spouses can provide types of social support including emotional support that cannot be replaced by any support services offered by organizations (Harvey, 1995).

The effects in family systems between the expatriate, spouse and children that impact attitudes and behaviors and eventually to the success of an assignment are termed crossover effects (McNulty, 2012). These will be discussed next.

### **2.3.2 Crossover and spillover effect**

Crossover effects mean the impact spouse's attitudes have on expatriate's attitudes and vice versa whereas spillover effect refers to the impact the experiences and attitudes in one domain e.g. work have on other domain e.g. family life. Both spillover and crossover effects are strong between spouse's adjustment and that of the expatriate. In addition, adjustment is

related to satisfaction and strengthens the intentions to stay on the assignment. (Takeuchi et al. 2002)

Black & Stephens (1989) divide the cross-cultural adjustment to three dimensions: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment. According to Haslberger & Brewster (2008) expatriates need to adjust to each of these dimensions separately. However, the dimensions are not isolated or independent but interact with each other (Andreason, 2008). Thus, spillover takes place from one dimension into another (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). For example, unclear role at work has negative influence on the employees work adjustment and due to spillover effect it has undesirable consequences also to the life outside work and thus to the general adjustment of the expatriate. Likewise, when the employee is satisfied with the living conditions abroad and thus experiences good general adjustment, it increases the satisfaction at work. (Takeuchi et al. 2002) Consequently, the expatriates who have problems in cross-cultural adjustment are more likely to terminate the international assignment prematurely (Andreason, 2008).

Further, it is not only the different dimensions of expatriate's adjustment that have influence on each other and create spillover effects from one dimension to others (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). Also the adjustment of the spouse has influence on the adjustment of the expatriate (Caligiuri et al. 1998). This crossover can impact the same dimension in both individuals, for example the spouse's degree of interactional adjustment may influence the expatriate's interactional adjustment. However, it can also effect across different dimensions, for example the expatriate's work adjustment can have influence on spouse's adjustment to new kind of family life. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008)

Caligiuri et al. (1998) suggest that family adjustment mediates the relationship between family characteristics and expatriate adjustment to working in the international assignment. The crossover effect is reciprocal and thus covers also the impact the expatriates feelings and experiences related to adjustment have on those of the spouse (Andreason, 2008; Caligiuri et al. 1998). According to Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) many spouses bring up the work related stress experienced by their working partners which illustrates the spillover and crossover effect from expatriate's work to his / her home. However, crossover is not limited to negative aspects. It is a two-way impact that applies to both positive and negative feelings, attitudes and experiences (Takeuchi et al. 2002). It includes both demands and capabilities.

The demands felt by one family member may increase the demands of the others, but also resources may be shared. The positive coping behaviors of one expatriate family member will have positive influence on the other members as well. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008)

Consequently, if the spouses adjust well in a foreign environment, they are able to support the expatriates better (Takeuchi et al. 2002). For example, if the spouse is in active interaction with local people and does not feel lonely, the good level of interactional adjustment of the spouse may have positive effects on the expatriate's adjustment. (Black & Stephens, 1989) On the other hand, all problems related to the family can have a crossover effect on the expatriate. In other words, the dissatisfaction of the spouse has negative influence on the satisfaction of the foreign worker (Black & Stephens, 1989). For example, when the spouse is unhappy about his / her career interruption, it can result in the dissatisfaction of the expatriate as well (Torbiorn, 1982 ref. in Black & Stephens, 1989).

The crossover effect is proposed to be caused by the state of isolation the expatriate family commonly faces during the assignment. While the familiar support systems the family had back home are far away, the family members may become more dependent on each other. (Harvey & Buckley, 1998 ref. in Andreason 2008, 9) The individuals in a family may create crossover effect consciously by showing empathy and trying to understand each others' feelings or it may happen automatically (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). In both cases, the feelings and experiences of one person affect those of the other person. This is essential to keep in mind also when planning and implementing supporting services for expatriates and their families. According to McNulty (2012), positive crossover effects can be enhanced by different forms of organizational support. The forms of organizational support are presented next.

## **2.4 Organizational support**

Providing adequate support for expatriate families helps to reduce stress and enables successful international relocation. Support for the spouse and the whole expatriate family contributes to expatriate's job satisfaction, reduces family-work conflict and increases the well-being of individuals. The investments made in organizational support pay back for the

companies for example in the forms of increased productivity, reduced turnover and higher willingness to accept global assignments. (Harvey, 1995)

#### **2.4.1 Forms of support**

Companies can do a lot to enhance the success of expatriate assignments. Desirable compensation packages help, but other means are usually more important. (Ivancevich, 2007) According to Andreason (2003) organizational support for expatriates and their families can be divided to direct and indirect forms of support. In the beginning, important direct forms of support include comprehensive pre-departure training and confirming that the foreign assignment benefits the expatriate's long term career plans (Ivancevich, 2007).

According to Haslberger & Brewster (2008) many companies don't include family members in the selection process and thus overlook family resources. Spousal and family support can be increased and improved by including family members in the decision-making related to the international assignment (Ivancevich, 2007). First, the family members should be interviewed during the selection process. Second, they should be included in the orientation and training programs related to the expatriation (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) and third the experiences from other expatriate families should be used to benefit the others in the same situation (Ivancevich, 2007). Similarly, Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) state that many expatriate families are not adequately prepared for the international assignment. Trainings should be offered to all family members on different phases of the assignment: before, during and after the relocation.

Further important form of support for all expatriate family members is to provide educational opportunities (Harvey, 1995) and organize or enable access to language courses. Inadequate language skills can cause misunderstandings and confusion. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) Learning the local language can be vital also in applying a job which relates to a major contributing factor of spousal adjustment. Consequently, one specific area for essential spousal support is the career assistance for expatriate's spouses in the case of dual career families (McNulty, 2012). Issues related to spouse's career are among the most common reasons for dissatisfaction of the spouse and thus affect negatively on the expatriate assignment (Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007).



Other direct forms of support include assistance with government requirements such as work permits (Harvey, 1995) cultural training for expatriates and their families, help in everyday duties like grocery shopping, transport and schooling (Andreason, 2003) as well as assistance in arranging the housing. Indirect forms of support for expatriates and the members of their families include assistance and encouragement in getting involved in different kinds of clubs and gatherings. These can include for example international groups or religious organizations. Involvement in the activities of the children's local school or of the community of the new neighborhood could also be encouraged. In addition, mental support can be offered to help the expatriate family members to better understand the new situation and form realistic expectations. (Andreason, 2003)

Many expatriates and their families also need information and assistance in health and wellness related issues. Organizations should provide expatriate families access to fitness and sports activities to help them to cope with the mental and physical challenges caused by adjustment process. Many expatriates and/or their family members gain weight or carry out unhealthy habits due to the new and unfamiliar situation. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

Further indirect forms of support, especially to help the spouse to adjust include recommending participation in hobbies and encouragement to do some kind of work. (Andreason, 2003) According to McNulty (2012), two types of organizational support have the greatest influence on the adjustment of the spouse: first, professional support referring to job search and career related assistance and second, social support to decrease marital stress. However, it is rare that a company provides assistance in finding a job for the spouse. Thus expatriate groups and networks in the assignment country often substitute the professional and private informational support. Similarly emotional support may be sought from social clubs, religious organizations, sports and friendships. The challenge is, that some of these, such as building friendships, may require a long time to become meaningful support. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) This highlights the importance of arranging time to maintain the relationship between the expatriate and the spouse. It is beneficial to encourage interaction and discussion within the family in foreign location but also with the family members left back home. There are many ways to communicate internationally and keep in contact with the relatives in another country by using for example Skype and Facebook. (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) The internet can be seen as a form of emotional support, allowing family members to have close contact and frequent interaction with the people they

miss from their home country (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) or from their earlier assignment countries. In addition, the companies can provide commuter assistance, for example allow time and/or cover travel expenses to enable meetings with relatives and friends (Harvey, 1995).

Different direct and indirect forms of support are summarized in table 4.

Direct support	Indirect support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation packages</li> <li>• Expatriate's career development</li> <li>• Including family in the selection process</li> <li>• Pre-departure training</li> <li>• Assistance with government requirements</li> <li>• Assistance in finding a home</li> <li>• Language courses</li> <li>• Training programs e.g. culture training</li> <li>• Extended adjustment time</li> <li>• Commuter assistance e.g. travel expenses and time</li> <li>• Help in everyday duties</li> <li>• Family mentoring programs</li> <li>• Psychological counseling</li> <li>• Job search assistance and career counseling for the spouse</li> <li>• Educational support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting involved in clubs</li> <li>• Participating in the activities of the children's school</li> <li>• Mental support in the new situation</li> <li>• Health and wellness information and services</li> <li>• Encourage interaction within the family</li> <li>• Encourage communication with the family and friends back home</li> <li>• Help in planning outings</li> <li>• Support in developing hobbies</li> <li>• Assistance in finding a part-time or voluntary job for the spouse</li> <li>• Practicing religion</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Different direct and indirect forms of support** (Andreason, 2003; Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012)

The employers of expatriates can organize above mentioned support services themselves or hire relocation service companies to implement all or part of the desired forms of support (Andreason, 2003). These companies offer a wide range of services e.g. comprehensive help and support when moving into a new country, such as organizing pre-visits, arranging accommodation, assistance in identifying best suited school and daycare options, spousal and family support as well as language and cultural training (Andreason, 2003; Finland Relocation Services, 2016). Using relocation service companies for organizing the support services can be beneficial, especially when the company has inadequate personnel, expertise

or finances to implement comprehensive support programs by themselves. (Andreason, 2003)

Without adequate support for the spouse, he / she often has little community involvement, makes poor judgements of the new environment, gets health problems and even depression and becomes strongly dependent on the expatriate for emotional support. However, even though the organization offers support for the expatriate families, it does not always lead to desired results. According to McNulty (2012), practical support is often criticized. This increases the importance of personal destination consultant to be able to improve the support and respond to the needs specific to each individual family. In addition, the contact person in the employing organization or relocation service company can act as a mental support for the expatriate and his / her family members and thus increase the feeling of being cared for. The concept of perceived organizational support encompasses these types of feelings and is described next.

#### **2.4.2 Perceived organizational support**

According to Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the perception employees have about to what degree the organization values their input and well-being. This perception affects employee's performance, job satisfaction and positive mood. In addition, perceived organizational support decreases withdrawal behavior. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) The rationale behind perceived organizational support is that employees tend to consider organizations as humanlike beings. Due to this tendency, also referred as personification of the organization employees think that by favorable or unfavorable treatment the organization shows that it likes or dislikes them. (Eisenberger et al., 1986)

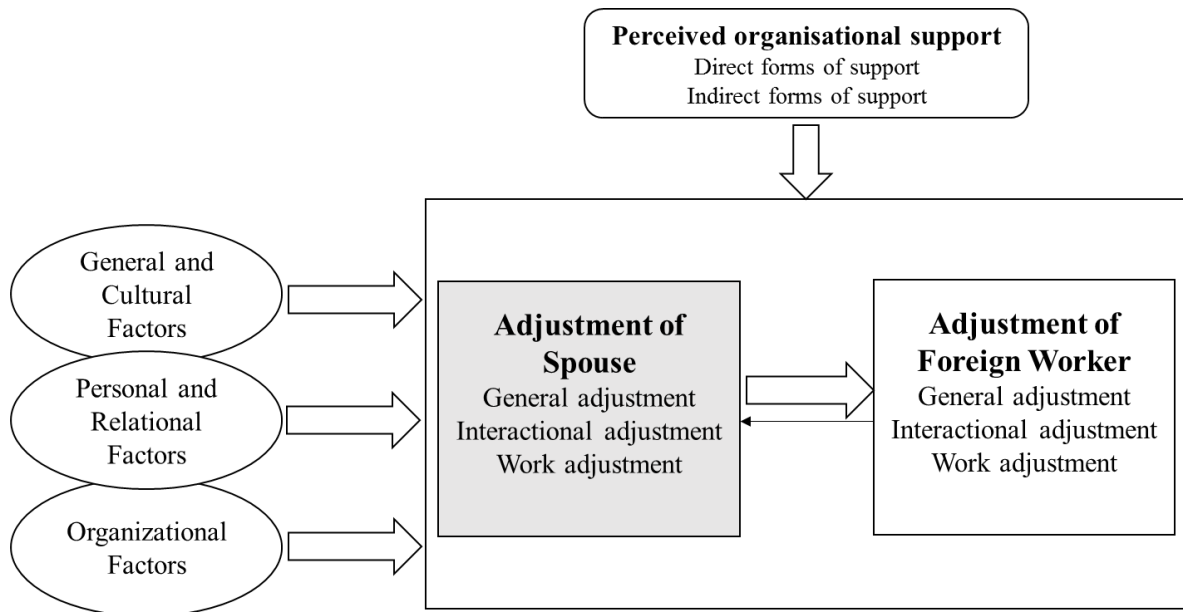
The theory of perceived organizational support is based on reciprocity indicating that favorable treatment experienced by either the employee or the employer will result in positive outcomes for both parties. From the employee's perspective, it also includes the assumption that assistance and help will be provided by the organization to overcome stressful situations. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) International assignments can include stressful factors. Consequently, POS has positive impact on the expatriates' work adjustment and organizational commitment on international assignments but also positive influence on

the adjustment to a foreign environment. Further it decreases assignment failures. (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004)

According to Kraimer & Wayne (2004), perceived organizational support in the context of expatriate assignments can be divided in three dimensions: adjustment, career and financial POS. Adjustment POS refers to the perception of how much the organization cares about the adjustment of the expatriate and his / her family on a foreign assignment. In this domain, POS is built by the organization's practices carried out to assist in relocation and adjustment to living and working in a new country. Career POS in turn means the degree to which the organization cares about the expatriate's career needs. The company practices to generate career POS include for example long-term career planning. Finally, financial POS deals with the extent of organization's interest in expatriate's financial needs and compensation. For example assignment bonuses and cost of living allowances impact on employee's perceptions of financial POS. The reflection of financial POS is that the employees become more committed to the organization when they feel that the employer supports them enough to maintain their standard of living while on assignment. (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004)

## **2.5 Literature summary and Theoretical framework**

Due to globalization, large number of people move away from their home country to work in another country or relocate with their spouse who goes for an international assignment. International assignments are needed to succeed in global competition. However it is common that they fail. There are several reasons for assignment failures, but the adjustment of expatriate family is one of the most critical factors to the success of an assignment in a foreign location (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Andreason, 2003). More specifically, expatriate's spouse's inability to adjust in a new environment is one of the most common reasons for international assignment to fail (e.g. Tung, 1981; Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Andreason, 2008). Thus the adjustment of spouse is in the core of the framework used in this study. The theoretical framework is presented in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework builds on the literature discussed earlier and is the basis for the empirical section of this study. The framework is comprised of three elements: first, the factors influencing the adjustment of a spouse, second the effect spouse's adjustment has on the foreign worker and third, the forms of organizational support contributing to the adjustment of an expatriate family. The summary of the literature including description of these elements is presented next.

Adjustment means the degree to which a person feels comfortable and adapted to living in a foreign country (Caligiuri et al. 1998). It is a complex, challenging and difficult process (Koveshnikov et al., 2014) consisting of three dimensions: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment (Black & Stephens, 1989). Each of these include different factors that have influence on expatriate families' adjustment process. First, general dimension refers to the adaptation to the common features of a new environment (Takeuchi et al. 2002) such as food, weather, housing and health care (Black & Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi et al. 2002). Second, interactional adjustment includes verbal and non-verbal communication with host country nationals (Black & Stephens, 1989) as well as local language skills. In this domain, aspects related to relationships such as making new friends and establishing close and deeper friendships are of high importance. Third, work dimension of cross-cultural adjustment refers to the level of psychological comfort an employee feels

with various features related to work (Takeuchi et al. 2002). This dimension does not always apply to spouses since all of them don't work while on assignment, but then the absence of work related factors can play a big role in spouses' adjustment.

In this study the aim is first to identify and explain the factors influencing satisfaction and adjustment of foreign workers' spouses. The objective is to extend and build on previous research by interviewing foreign workers' spouses and foreign workers themselves willing to talk about their personal experiences. According to existing literature the factors affecting cross-cultural adjustment are mostly related to the three dimensions of adjustment and include work related factors, financial issues, cultural factors, individual characteristics, relational factors and aspects related to accompanying family. For the purpose of this study, the factors are grouped in three categories: first general and cultural factors including e.g. weather, food and local language, second personal and relational factors covering attitude and motivation as well as interaction with other people and third organizational factors including work related factors and aspects concerning the employment status of the spouse.

From spouses' perspective the factors related to job are not the most important, but the problem of not getting a job. One of the major causes for dissatisfaction of spouse is interruption in his or her own career which can lead to other problems as well. Due to absence of work and colleagues, unemployed spouses may feel isolated, lonely and unclear about their role (Black & Stephens, 1989; Rosenbusch, & Cseh, 2012). In addition they may end up having too much time without knowing how to spend it. Further aspect related to unemployment of the spouse is the loss of second income in dual career families.

Despite additional challenges such as changes in day-to-day routines and children's schooling (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008), family can also be seen as a resource in the adjustment process. The characteristics and abilities of individual family members contribute to their own adjustments as well as to the adjustment of the whole family. Attitudinal qualities such as tolerance for ambiguity and desire to communicate as well as attitudes towards other cultures influence adjustment in a foreign environment (Black & Stephens, 1989). The cultural context itself impacts adjustment process as well. The more the culture at the destination differs from that of one's home country the more difficult the adaptation will be (Black & Stephens, 1989).

After identifying the factors that influence adjustment, this thesis aims at explaining how the degree of the spouse's adjustment affects the foreign worker. In the literature there are several mechanisms to explain this influence. In this study crossover and spillover effects as well as family systems theory are presented. Family systems theory views family as one entity, an organized system where family members contribute to the system and are dependent on each other (Minuchin, 1985). The behavior of one family member affects the other members and again their reaction and feedback have influence on the initial behavior of that one family member. Also external factors have impact on this spiral of interaction. Family systems theory has been used to understand the cross-cultural adjustment process. For example Caligiuri et al. (1998) show that family characteristics including family support, family communication and family adaptability have significant influence on expatriates' adjustment process in a new environment.

Also crossover effect explains the influence individual family members have on each other's adjustment. It can impact the same dimension in both individuals, for example the level of spouse's interactional adjustment may influence the expatriate's interactional adjustment. However, it can also impact across different dimension, for example the expatriate's work adjustment can have influence on the spouse's adjustment to family life. The theory to explain the effect between the different dimensions of adjustment is called spillover. (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) The individual dimensions are not isolated or independent but interact with each other (Andreason, 2008). Thus the experiences in one domain spill over to the other domains. This study aims at examining these effects in expatriate families relocated into Finland.

After studying the factors influencing the adjustment of foreign workers' spouses and the effect spouses' adjustment have on expatriates, this study aims at providing practical implications to support the adjustment process. The support includes several forms of concrete organizational support as well as the feeling of being cared for which is referred as perceived organizational support (POS). The perception employees have about to what degree the organization values their input and well-being affects employee's performance, job satisfaction and positive mood as well as decreases withdrawal behavior (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The practical forms of support contribute to this perception and include for example compensation package and career planning for the expatriate. The forms of organizational support applicable to the whole family may include e.g. pre-departure and

cultural training, language courses and assistance in finding a new home as well as encouragement to get involved in clubs and other types of social activities. The forms of support specifically for the spouse could include assistance in job search and developing hobbies. The employers of expatriates can organize these support services themselves or hire relocation service company to implement all or part of the desired forms of support to help the expatriate families to adjust and consequently contribute to the success of the assignment.

### **3 DATA AND METHODS**

As this study aims at describing, assessing and understanding the elements related to the research questions, qualitative rather than quantitative approach was chosen. The decision to use qualitative methods in this study is supported by e.g. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) who state that qualitative approaches deal with interpretation and understanding. Corbin & Strauss (2008, 13) provide further advantages of qualitative research by presenting that it enables access to the deeper experience of participants and even “endless possibilities to learn more about people”. The purpose of this study is to learn more about foreign workers’ spouses, foreign workers themselves and to understand the adjustment process and the experiences related to it. Consequently selecting qualitative approach is a justified decision.

However, there are several different types of qualitative approaches and data collection methods and the decision on what kind of qualitative research to conduct, is also important. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) Focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews were considered suitable data collection techniques for this study. Focus group research is a data collection technique where information is gathered from group interaction about a topic defined by the researcher. The researcher provides the focus of the discussion, but the data comes from the interaction within a group. (Morgan, 1997) Whereas in qualitative interviews the researcher asks questions face to face from interviewees, whose answers form the data for the research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

It has been debated which data collection technique is better, interviews or focus groups (Morgan, 1997). To avoid this debate and take advantage of the benefits of both methods, both interviews and focus groups were chosen to be used in this study. Morgan (1997) supports this decision by stating that focus groups cannot replace the research that is done



well by using individual interviews, but it provides access to the types of data that cannot be collected with individual interviews or participant observation. Participant observation was also considered, but it was concluded that the chosen two techniques have more advantages in this study. According to Morgan (1997, 9-10) the superiority of one method over another depends on “the research topic itself, the background and interests of the researcher, and the nature of the ultimate audience for the research.” All these three factors affected the choice of method for this research.

It was concluded that participant observations would be impractical and inefficient in this study, especially when the objective is to produce practical implications for business purposes. The advantages of focus group discussions in turn support this objective. In focus groups the similar and differing views and experiences of several participants become immediately evident (Morgan, 1997). According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) focus group research stimulates group interaction and thus builds shared conceptions. The situation may encourage the individual members to talk more freely than in individual interview and express their views as a reaction to someone-else’s opinions. It is important what the people say, but also how they say it as well as what is not said (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). However, some individuals experience group talk differently than others and may find it more convenient to talk privately, especially as the topic may contain personal and intimate aspects.

Another disadvantage of focus groups is the controlled setting created by the interviewer. The naturalness of interaction may suffer. (Morgan, 1997) In addition, the role of the interviewer is important in keeping the discussion in the topic and acquiring relevant information (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Also, the time for each participant to express their opinions is much shorter than in individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). These disadvantages are compensated by using also individual interviews in data collection. In individual interviews the whole duration of discussion can be used to collect one participant’s opinions and experiences. Thus deeper and more detailed information can be gained (Morgan, 1997).

In both focus group discussions and individual interviews semi-structured form was followed to enhance naturalness of interaction and allow freedom in conversations to ask additional and specific questions, but at the same time to keep the conversation on topic.

### **3.1 Research context**

As the objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing the satisfaction and adjustment of foreign workers' spouses in Finland, relevant features of the Finnish context will be described next. Description of the Finnish context is essential because the location and culture related factors influence adjustment. The factors are divided in three categories: general and cultural factors, language and interaction as well as organizational factors to reflect the three-dimensional model of adjustment by Black & Stephens (1989).

#### **3.1.1 General and cultural factors**

The number of foreigners or individuals with foreign backgrounds is quite modest in Finland, approx. 220 000 foreign nationals lived in Finland in 2014 (Tilastokeskus, 2016a). However, it is also important to note that the number of foreigners has increased considerably in a relatively short period of time. In 1990 approx. 20 000 foreign nationals lived in Finland (Tilastokeskus, 2016a). Thus, the diversification of nationalities living in Finland is a quite recent phenomenon. Similarly, the diversification of religions has increased recently. Still, Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity is the largest religion with 72.9% of Finns being a member of the church (Suomen Ev. lut. kirkko, 2016). Generally, Finns are not strongly religious but religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated and Christian customs observed as part of the Finnish culture (Infopankki, 2016b).

Celebrations, both religious and non-religious reflect the values of the society and represent the Finnish cultural tradition. (Niemi, Kuusisto & Kallioniemi, 2014). Each holiday has its traditional food. For example at Easter Finns eat lamb, mämmi (Finnish Easter pudding) and pasha, during the summer new potatoes, salmon and other fish, sausages and fresh berries and at Christmas ham, root vegetable casseroles, ginger biscuits and glögi (mulled wine). (Visithelsinki, 2015) Examples of typical Finnish food around the year include berries, potatoes, rye bread, Karelian pies and cinnamon buns. Having a coffee is a frequent habit in Finland and Finns consume more coffee than others in any European country. (VisitFinland, 2016) In general, the emphasis on health and nutrition aspects of the food can be seen in the Finnish food culture (Food from Finland, 2012).

Further distinctive feature of Finland is its northern location, relatively cold weather and four different seasons. In winter, from October / November to early April, the average temperature is below 0°C, snow covers grounds and lakes freeze whereas in the summer season the average daily temperatures are higher than 10°C and can be above 25°C for about two weeks a year (Finnish meteorological institute, 2016). The weather conditions may differ a lot from those of the foreigners' home countries and thus adaptation especially to winter season is required.

Due to the long and cold winters, one unique feature of the Finnish culture was born. Finns built small heated rooms or cottages for places to wash at the time before running hot water. These rooms, called sauna, have become an integral part of the Finnish culture and nowadays there is one at almost every home, company and institution. An invitation to go to sauna from a Finn, even a business contact, is normal. (ThisisFinland, 2009) The habit of going to sauna can be hard to relate to by foreigners, but if they try to understand it, it is also a way to learn more about Finnish mentality. It symbolizes relaxation and purification and in ideal environment it incorporates a relationship with nature. (Tixier, 1996)

### **3.1.2 Language and interaction**

The limited history of foreigners living in Finland and the uniqueness and demanding features of the Finnish language are relevant factors that distinguish Finnish context from for example an English speaking country. The low level of Finnish language skills complicates the everyday life of foreign nationals and according to Valtonen (2001) it is one of the most important reasons for the difficulties of finding a job and unemployment of foreigners. In addition to Finnish, Swedish is also official language in Finland due to being a part of Sweden until 1809. Finland-Swedes constitute about 5.8% of the Finnish population. Most institutions such as daycare and schools are represented in both languages. (Lojander-Visapää, 2008) Finnish children learn Swedish in the school, but English is usually the first foreign language throughout the school years (Helsingin kaupungin opetusvirasto, 2010). Thus almost all Finns speak English.

Even though the majority of the Finns are capable of speaking in English, they can be less willing to talk with someone they don't know. (Tixier, 1996) In general, Finns are seen as rather silent people. They tend to speak directly and straightforward and it is not considered

impolite. It is perceived polite to listen to others and avoid doing anything to draw attention to oneself. (Degni, Suominen, Essén, El Ansari & Vehviläinen-Julkunen, 2012) Modesty and harmony between people are valued and people are considerate towards others. Social life is organized and punctuality appreciated (Tixier, 1996). Silence is natural and privacy honored. Finnish customs include complying with the values of equality, fairness and honesty (Infopankki, 2016). According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2015 Finland is the second-least corrupt country in the world (World Economic Forum, 2016). Honesty shows also in Finns daily behavior.

### **3.1.3 Organizational factors**

Organizational culture affects the way employees and teams interact with each other at work and with stakeholders outside the organization (Schrodt, 2002). Organizational culture can be defined as a set of shared assumptions that lead to the appropriate behavior in various situations (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). According to Schein (2010) cultural forces are powerful and it is important to understand them because they help to explain many frustrating experiences related to social life and work.

In Finland the way of working is task-centered and decisions and activities focus around what needs to be done. Timetables and plans are usual and it is expected that everyone follows them. Honesty and respecting agreements are important. In case of a disagreement, negotiating is used to solve the conflict. Open discussion reduces misunderstandings. This applies to all levels since all people are considered equal in the Finnish workplaces. (Infopankki, 2014; 2016b) According to Tixier (1996) the management style is similar to the German, British or North American style. The organizational hierarchy is respected and subordinates are used to receiving orders but the interaction is rather informal. (Tixier, 1996)

The importance of observing timetables is relevant also regarding the working hours. Employees arrive and leave at a stated time (Tixier, 1996). Being late is considered impolite for the others who have to wait. However, many organizations use flexible working hours which means that employees can decide when they come to work and then work the agreed number of hours. (Infopankki, 2016b) Most of the employees in Finland (71%) work typically for 35-40 hours a week on average. About 10% of paid workforce works regularly over 40-hour weeks. (Tilastokeskus, 2016b) There are differences in the ways to measure

the working time and thus the comparison between different countries is not straightforward. However according to World Economic Forum (2015) Finns work 1643h per year which is less than OECD average 1770h. In USA the yearly working hours are slightly above the OECD average, Mexicans work the longest hours and Norwegians, Germans and French belong to the workers with least working hours, all below 1500 hours in a year. (World Economic Forum, 2015) Thus the working days may be longer or shorter than in the previous job depending on the country of origin.

For people outside work organizations, Finland has a comprehensive social security system including benefits and services for unemployed people, families with children and students as well as housing and sickness-related benefits (Kela, 2012).

### **3.2 Unit of analysis and sampling decisions**

As this thesis is done due to a request made by Finland Relocation Services Oy Ab Ltd, the interviewees consist of individuals that have used FRS's services. When FRS receives information about a new person who will relocate into Finland, a questionnaire is sent to the person to collect personal information such as name, contact details, information on nationality, accompanying family, planned arrival date to Finland etc. Also housing requirements are asked if home search service has been authorized. (Ojala, 2016)

For the purpose of this study, first a list of all the foreign workers' spouses who had filled in the questionnaire during the years 2013, 2014, 2015 or 2016 was generated. The timeframe between filling in the questionnaire and the actual relocation is usually maximum six months. (Ojala, 2016) Thus all the participants have arrived in Finland within four years before the study. This selection based on recent relocation aims at securing that the interviewees have fresh and memorable experiences of their adjustment process. The list included contact details of 120 spouses (Ojala, 2016).

The intention was not to limit the types of interviewees, but to get as diverse group of participants as possible to allow practical implications to be drawn. Thus no limitations were set regarding home country nationality, age, gender, or occupational background. The time of relocation and the use of some kind of relocation services offered by FRS were the only

mutual selection criteria of the potential participants. Consequently, all the 120 spouses were considered as potential interviewees for this study. An e-mail invitation was sent to the spouses to welcome them to “Expatriate Spouses in Finland” event organized by FRS in April 2016. The purpose of the event was to offer the foreign workers’ spouses an opportunity to learn more about the Finnish culture and traditions, and share experiences with their peers. In the invitation e-mail the spouses were also invited to participate in a research study and told that focus group interviews will be held in the event. At the registration for the event, also participants’ consent for sharing their contact details with researcher was asked and whether they would be interested in taking part in the research. It was mentioned that participants will not be identifiable in the research results. An opportunity to take part in the study was offered also to those who were not able to participate in the event. (Ojala, 2016)

After the registration, the contact details of the individuals who had expressed their willingness to take part in the study were received. Then these persons were contacted and agreed with 15 of them to participate in focus group discussion. At the event, two consecutive focus group interviews with 14 participants were conducted. The number is lower than agreed 15 since one of the persons, who was supposed to participate didn’t show up. Five of the spouses participated in the first group discussion and 9 in the second. In addition, 4 spouses were interviewed individually later as well as their working partner. One of the expatriates refused to participate and thus this study includes individual interview data from 4 spouses and 3 foreign workers. The expatriates’ children were not interviewed regarding family adjustment in this thesis. It was expected that the relevant issues related to children are addressed by the spouse or the foreign worker.

The focus groups and individual interviews consist of 20 participants in total. One of the spouses participated both in the focus group discussion and an individual interview. Thus the experiences of 17 expatriate couples / families are included in this study. There were several reasons that affected the amount of interviews e.g. availability of voluntary contacts and time constraints. However, the number of participants is considered adequate for this study. The main principle in determining the sample size in qualitative studies is to collect data until the saturation point is achieved (Mason, 2010). Saturation means that the collection of additional data does not provide new relevant information about the research topic (Mason, 2010). There is no definite guideline on the number of subjects required to reach saturation, but based on earlier studies the determined 20 is adequate. For example,

according to Mason (2010), the most common sample sizes in PhD studies using qualitative interviews are between 20 and 30 whereas according to Guest et al. (2006) experiment, saturation was reached after the first twelve interviews.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Two semi-structured one-hour focus group discussions were conducted at spouse event in Helsinki, Finland in April 2016. Focus group discussions typically have about two to ten participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In this study, more than two was selected to enhance rich discussions. However, the maximum number of participants per discussion was limited to below ten to keep the conversation focused on the topic and to enable equal opportunities for each participant to contribute to the discussion. The first focus group consisted of 5 participants and the second of 9 participants. Both discussions lasted little longer than one hour.

The age range of participants is from 27 to 48 years. The aim was to include both female and male participants, if possible, to increase the heterogeneity of the representation. However, only females signed up for the spouse event and thus participated in this study from the spouse's perspective. Still, the heterogeneity of the interviewees was pursued by selecting participants from multiple nationalities and different backgrounds. Further, these particular groups of individuals were selected to gain thorough data to answer the research questions. The aim of the focus group sessions was to have the spouses to talk to each other about their feelings related to relocation, cultural adjustment and overall satisfaction in a new situation, how their feelings and experiences impact their husbands and what kind of role organizational support has in their adjustment process.

Letters and numbers are used to identify participants. Thus in the coding and analysis the spouses are referred to e.g. Participant C to indicate a particular participant in a focus group discussion and e.g. S1 or FW1 to indicate a particular interviewee in individual interviews. Table 5 lists the nationalities and ages of the participants in focus group discussions.

Focus group 1		Focus group 2	
Nationality:	Hungarian (1)	Nationality:	Bulgarian (1)
	Indian (2)		Canadian (1)
	Portuguese (1)		Colombian (1)
	British (1)		Indian (1)
			Mexican (1)
			Russian (1)
			British (1)
			Ukrainian (1)
			American (1)
Age:	31-35 (1)	Age:	26-30 (1)
	36-40 (2)		31-35 (4)
	41-45 (1)		36-40 (3)
	46-50 (1)		46-50 (1)

**Table 5: Participant nationalities and ages in focus group discussions**

In addition, individual/couple interviews were conducted with four spouses and three foreign workers. Some preferred to be interviewed individually and others together with their partner. The selection criteria was the same as for the focus groups and the individuals were selected from the same contact list. The individual interviews of the spouses aimed at gaining answers to similar questions as in the focus group discussions, but in a private setting. The foreign worker interviews in turn approach the investigated phenomenon, spousal adjustment, from the foreign worker's perspective. The interviews with the spouses lasted approximately from 1h to 1h 30min. and the interviews with the foreign workers approximately 1h. Table 6 lists the nationalities and ages of the participants in individual interviews.



Spouse		Foreign worker	
Nationality:	French (1)	Nationality:	French (1)
	Swedish (1)		Norwegian (1)
	American (2)		American (1)
Age:	30-35 (1)	Age:	36-40 (1)
	41-45 (1)		41-45 (1)
	46-50 (1)		50+ (1)
	50+ (1)		

**Table 6: Participant nationalities and ages in individual interviews**

Before the actual interviews and focus group discussions, background information of the participants was collected. This information includes e.g. nationality, age, gender, children, working status before the assignment, previous international experience and satisfaction with life before expatriation plans. The complete background information forms are in Appendix A and B. In the actual interviews and discussions the participants were asked to describe their life in Finland and to give examples of the points of satisfaction and difficulties related to adjustment as well as how their feelings and behavior has influenced their partner. Finally, the means of organizational support and assistance were discussed to gather information on what kind of support the participants have appreciated and what kind of further support they would have found beneficial. In the interviews with foreign workers, the participants were additionally asked to describe how their spouses' experiences of adjustment affect their own satisfaction, adaptation to new location and work commitment. The interview questions are in Appendix C and D for individual interviews and in Appendix E for focus group discussions.

In both empirical data collection techniques used, focus groups and individual interviews, the discussions were tape recorded and transcribed word by word. The discussions were held in English. Thus no translation was required and the quotations can be used as they were originally said. This enables to maintain the nuances of each discussion and personal tone of the individual experiences. In addition to voice recording, notes were made about the observations on body language and the discussions held with the participants after the recording was turned off. In focus group events, notes were also made about who said what in case it would have been unclear to identify the particular interviewee from the recording.

### **3.4 Analysis and interpretation**

The focus group discussions and interviews are analyzed using thematic analysis. It has many similarities with content analysis (Marks & Yardley, 2004) which concentrates on occurring themes and patterns when combining and comparing empirical data from groups and individuals (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). The aim is to find repeated issues and similar statements related to adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses and how those further affect foreign workers satisfaction and commitment. Based on the analysis, practical implications will be drawn concerning how employers and relocation services can contribute to these factors.

In thematic analysis, coding can be used to categorize the empirical data (Marks & Yardley, 2004). It is a procedure by which the recorded talk and discussions are classified in meaningful categories (Huberman & Miles 2002). According to Corbin & Strauss (2008, 13) qualitative research is about "playing with words, making order out of seeming disorder, and thinking in terms of complex relationships". Coding was used as a tool to accomplish these missions in this study.

A code, also referred as a theme, implies something important in the collected data with regards to the research questions. It also expresses patterns in responses or meanings within the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) One code can include a particular term used by the interviewees, but also the data where the term is latent, but the discussion clearly belongs to that theme (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Thus more interpretation is used than in the pure content analysis method. In this study there is more practical value to interpret the data than solely count the occurrences of codes. Also, as Braun & Clarke (2006) note, more occurrences do not inevitably mean that the particular theme itself is more essential. The importance lies in whether the code captures something important related to the research, and the researcher decides what is important in that sense. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The codes can be defined based on existing theories, deductive coding, or created from the data gathered for the study, inductive coding (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Abduction combines these two methods (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) and is used in this study. It allows the inclusion of all possible factors that affect the adjustment and not only the ones mentioned

in the earlier research. However, as Marks & Yardley (2004, 58) argue: "No theme can be entirely inductive or data driven, since the researcher's knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes." And also, it is not relevant to code everything that is said in the interviews and focus group discussions, but only the pieces of information that are related to the research questions.

In this thesis, the practical steps to proceed with thematic analysis created by Braun & Clarke (2006) were followed. Next a modification of the model is presented including examples of each step.

Step 1:        Reading the transcriptions from the interviews and focus group discussions.  
                 Making notes and listing preliminary codes.

Analysis started with reading the transcriptions from the interviews and focus group discussions and making a preliminary list of codes including around 100 different codes with an explanation of the meaning. One example of a code is *Communication differences* and explanation for it is *Differences in the ways of communication and how the person feels about the differences*.

Step 2:        Deciding the initial codes related to the research questions and coding the pieces of data according to the defined codes. Keeping record of the explanations of each code.

After listing the preliminary codes and reading the literature part of the thesis and the transcriptions again the initial codes for analysis were chosen. In addition, some of the codes were grouped together such as code *Local ways of interaction* with *Communication differences* and more descriptive explanations of each code were written. This stage resulted in 86 codes with which the transcriptions were coded.

Step 3        Arranging the codes in integrative themes. Describing the meanings of each theme.

After the initial coding, all the coded material was arranged under the three research questions and grouped in six preliminary themes: overall perception of adjustment, general

/ cultural factors, factors related to interactional adjustment, organizational adjustment factors, influence mechanisms between foreign worker and spouse and forms of support.

Step 4            Checking how the themes answer to the research questions and modifying the themes and/or codes if needed.

At this point the literature review was read through once more and research framework modified slightly. In the end, the following four themes were defined to answer the first research question: Overall perception of adjustment, General and cultural factors, Personal and relational factors and Organizational factors. Further the fifth theme called the influence family members have on each other's adjustment include findings related to the second research question. Finally the last theme, Organizational support, covers results related to the third research question.

Step 5            Finalizing the themes and analyzing the data. Describing how the themes answer to the research questions.

At this stage a draft version of the findings chapter was written.

Step 6            Writing the report. Describing the themes and providing answers to the research questions. Presenting the practical implications based on the analysis. Using quotations and thick descriptions in reporting the results.

At this stage, the findings chapter was further worked on and the conclusions chapter written including practical implications and suggestions for further research.

### **3.5 Trustworthiness and limitations of the study**

#### **3.5.1 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are used to describe trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln et al. 2011). Credibility refers to the assumption that the researcher is familiar with the topic, has collected enough data and

explains the analysis process behind the interpretations (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In this study, information was received from the organization operating in relocation business and from foreign workers and their spouses who had used relocation services. In addition existing articles and earlier research results on this topic were reviewed before the actual collection of the empirical data. Furthermore, a pilot interview was conducted with an Indian spouse who had moved to Finland three years ago to test the research questions and get familiar with the topic. The data is collected from multiple sources and the sufficiency explained in more detail in data collection chapter. Also the analysis process including coding is explained in detail.

Transferability refers to similarity with other studies and their results (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). The existing literature and earlier studies are presented in this thesis and the linkages with the findings of this study are discussed. The dependability, referring to providing information about how the study is done (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008), is indicated by detailed descriptions of the empirical research project. This applies also to conformability that refers to explaining linkages between findings and interpretations (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008).

In addition to these four criteria, the participants were encouraged to be frank and honest to enhance trustworthiness. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants is ensured. Even though the interviews and discussions are recorded and transcribed, the identifiable data is kept only by the researcher, and in the thesis the participants are referred to without any indication to certain person.

### **3.5.2 Limitations**

This study presents and describes factors that affect foreign workers' spouses adjustment which the participants consider relevant combined with those identified in the existing literature. It aims at gaining a holistic understanding of the factors as well as their effect on spouses' and foreign workers' adjustment and satisfaction. Finally, it aims at providing practical implications on how the organizations could improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses and what kind of related services they could offer. This final aim has limited the factors to exclude those that the organizations cannot influence such as orders or regulations set in the law or the procedures defined by public bureaus.

In addition, this study is limited to foreign workers' and their spouses' adjustment in Finland, and even more precisely in Southern Finland. This hinders the generalizability of the results to some extent. However, the participants relocated into Finland come from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds which in turn widens the perspective. Because of the varied backgrounds, the participants will not necessarily represent a typical foreign worker's spouse, but then again this heterogeneity supports a wider view on the topic. Another limitation relates to the sampling decisions as well. As this thesis was done due to a request made by Finland Relocation Services Oy Ab Ltd, the interviewees consist of individuals that have used FRS's services. Thus all the participants had received organizational support for their adjustment and the study doesn't include expatriate families who have not received any support services.

Further limitation is that the participation in this study requires to meet with the interviewer in person. This excludes the potential participants who don't feel comfortable in face-to-face interviews and would prefer e-mail contact or online survey. However, for this study it was decided that those methods would not offer thick descriptions required for understanding the relevant factors. Another limitation related to the chosen data collection methods is that the researcher didn't have earlier experience in conducting focus group discussions. The role of the moderator is important in guiding the discussion and thus the lack of earlier experience may limit the findings. However, the discussions were performed after careful planning together with the commissioning organization that has strong experience within the subject field.

Despite the limitations, this study will present a valid description of the factors that influence the satisfaction and adjustment of foreign workers' spouses in Finland by combining the theoretical literature and multi-method empirical studies and explains the ways the adjustment of spouse affects foreign worker.

## **4 FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings of this study categorized according to the three research questions. First, to contextualize the researched phenomenon the everyday lives of the expatriates and their spouses are described. The aim is to show how the perceived reality of expatriate families look like after relocation. Also the overall adjustment tied to everyday-life is described. Then more specifically to answer the first research question, the factors related to adjustment as perceived by the participants are presented in three themes: general and cultural factors, personal and relational factors as well as organizational factors. Next, to answer the second research question, the influence mechanisms between foreign workers and their spouses are discussed as expressed by the participants. Finally, to answer the third research question, the participants' experiences related to the forms of organizational support are presented.

### **4.1 Overall perception of adjustment**

#### **4.1.1 Descriptions of everyday life after relocation**

Relocation process is often very fast and hectic. Several participants described that they only had a few weeks between the decision to move and the actual relocation. Within that short period of time, there are a lot of different issues that need to be taken care of such as selling a house and cars and packing everything that will be moved with the family as well as making arrangements and preparations in the new location. Participants called this period crazy or hectic time when they didn't have time to even think about all relevant aspects. Also the first weeks or even months after the move were described busy. Typically, the spouses organized the house, took care of the practicalities, exercised and did household work such as cooking.

After the busy beginning in the new environment, the expatriates and the spouses who worked described how their everyday life was structured around work. But the spouses who didn't work, started to feel that they need activities to keep themselves occupied. This is how one spouse described her experiences and feelings six months after the move: "The first months were mainly just setting up the house, getting familiar. It's just now that I'm getting

a little bit familiar with the place and have more free time. -- I do look for some kind of maybe work or learn some kind of language or something to keep myself occupied. Nothing full time, but yes some kind of an activity which gives me an outlet where I can do something.” For most of the spouses it is important to keep busy and the means to achieve that don’t have to be anything specific. Many mentioned that they wanted to join with other ladies, meet people, have some hobbies or work. Some explained it in the form of a wish or longer term plan, but for some it is vital to keep busy, no matter how, to avoid getting bored or “going mad” as one spouse put it.

Over time most of the spouses felt that they had settled and many of them had found activities to fill up their days. Some of the spouses were working either full-time or part-time. They described their regular days consisting mostly of work and relaxing at home as did the expatriates. The spouses who didn’t work, but had children described their everyday-life consisting of taking the children to the daycare or school and for example studying Finnish, exercising and meeting friends. Whereas the spouses who didn’t have children or had older children had a hobby like singing or photographing, some were actively involved in organizations such as the parent teacher organization of their children’s school, had started studying or did some voluntary job. Many spouses also liked just walking around and seeing different places – especially those who had a dog. Due to having more free-time most of the spouses had explored the new environment more than the expatriates. They felt that their working partners had not familiarized themselves with the Finnish culture or things to do or places to see, but only travelled between their home and office. However the expatriates themselves didn’t consider that problematic or reducing their satisfaction.

#### **4.1.2 Gradual adjustment**

In the end, most of the expatriates and their spouses who had been in Finland long enough to adapt expressed that they had adjusted. However, they all had to make their journey of adaptation. For many, the adjustment happened step by step. The experiences related to gradual adjustment are presented next.

Several participants described difficult situations, bad experiences or negative feelings they had during the first months or the first year after the move. Many experienced frustration and confusion caused by unfamiliar environment. They described for example situations



where nobody had smiled or said hi to them or unpleasant situations in the shops where they didn't understand the signs or couldn't find something they were looking for. Also the embarrassment or anger related to not being able to have an own bank account or card was brought up by many spouses. The negative feelings were sometimes strong like one spouse described her anger related to loneliness: "Like seriously my anger lasted three days and like I couldn't control it, I would just feel really upset and life was terrible." However, most of the participants had found a way to make their lives better. For example the spouse who gave the preceding description said she now does something every day that gives her an excuse to get out of the house such as going to the grocery store or café or meeting up someone for lunch and that helps her to be happy.

Over time, many felt that they had adjusted by accepting that there is another way of living and picking the pieces of the new culture that they wanted to include in their lives and personalities. The participants used expressions like "now I understand", "everything seems quite familiar" and "it feels like a home now" to describe that they felt comfortable and adapted, were familiar with the new environment and able to live normal life. However, some still had contradictory feelings towards Finns or Finnish cultural features like one spouse described: "I still would feel this way like I hate Finns, they're so closed, this is so stupid and you know you definitely have those days, I don't hate Finns and I think they're great." Further, not all of the participants felt that they had adapted. Some were disappointed to realize that the new environment didn't have enough elements of their home country and others felt that they just needed more time to adjust than they had originally imagined. "Now we know for all kinds of reasons that if we can make it work here, over the long term it would be better...it's just we have to get there and it's a long adjustment." concluded one spouse.

Regardless of the outcome or speed of the adaptation process of each participant, all mentioned several factors that affected their adjustment. To answer more specifically to the first research question: "*What kind of factors influence adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses in Finland?*" the factors related to adjustment as perceived by the participants are presented next in three themes starting with general and cultural factors.

## **4.2 Factors influencing adjustment**

### **4.2.1 General and cultural factors**

#### Local language

The most discussed topic among participants was local language. It was mentioned in relation to all three dimensions of adjustment: general, interactional and work adjustment, but had strongest influence on interaction. Almost all participants found Finnish difficult and complicated. Still most of the spouses who didn't work studied Finnish and the Finnish lessons were a part of their weekly schedule and helped in general adjustment by keeping them occupied. On the other hand, none of the expatriates were studying Finnish. Some of them said they had tried, but didn't continue since they could do their work in English. Similarly the spouses who had a job, could manage it without knowing Finnish. Still they expressed that it feels sometimes strange to be in an environment that feels familiar and like home, but you don't understand a word of what people are saying. "I can survive without it but of course then you have a handicap from a social perspective, that's for sure." stated one expatriate. Thus for the participants who worked, the language didn't have negative effects on work adjustment, but disturbed interactional adjustment. For some, it was the only element missing to feel completely comfortable and like home thus affecting general adjustment.

However, there were also exceptions to the statement that the language is complicated. Some of the participants felt comfortable with their progress in language studies and a couple of spouses even wanted to talk in Finnish in the interview. "I love the language, it's quite easy, you just understand the logic and that's it." commented one spouse. Further, all the participants expressed that they had been able to accomplish everything in English. They explained that in all places in Finland it is easy to communicate in English, which reduces the negative effects of local language on adjustment. So the language was a big problem only for those who could not speak Finnish nor English. They expressed that in that situation communication is really hard. But the language caused smaller problems also for those who spoke English, especially related to interactional adjustment. When interacting with locals they had to first admit that they didn't speak Finnish before they could participate the world

around them, for example a conversation at a public place. This made them feel embarrassed and less willing to start a conversation with a stranger.

### Local ways of communication

In addition to the language there are other differences in the ways of communication and interaction. One typical feature of the Finnish way of communication mentioned by several participants is the straightforward communication and scarce small talk. “We learned very quickly that if we were in a store and we were asking someone for help, you know just stick to the basics. They really don’t need to know why we moved here, how long we’ve been here, how long we plan to stay, they don’t need to know all that.” described one spouse. However, many participants had absorbed quickly the local way of not talking small talk and felt soon comfortable not explaining their private life in public situations or talking anything additional when they were running errands. Further, several said that they didn’t feel comfortable with the small talk anymore even when they went for a visit in their previous home country. But the Finnish tendency to respect privacy and silence caused misunderstandings and increased caution towards their own behavior. Some found it difficult to separate the cultural difference from rudeness or normal silence from the one caused by a fight.

### Weather

In addition to language and communication habits, local weather was mentioned by almost all participants. Most commonly, the weather was talked about as a factor determining how the person felt. Sunny and warm weather with lots of light made happy and helped in the adjustment process whereas darkness and cold weather made the persons feel miserable and complicated their adaptation. The worst time period brought up by several participants, was the first winter. Many felt alone and scared and missed back home because of the darkness. “It’s the first winter, you don’t have that many friends and you’re a little scared to step out alone, scared again not in the terms of safety, just the winter and the darkness, you feel like you just want to be home”, commented one spouse and many others had similar experiences. Thus the darkness and harsh weather had negative influence on the participants’ general adjustment, but also on interactional adjustment. Several spouses mentioned that nobody wanted to talk to them in the first winter, they felt lonely and had fights with their husbands.

For those, who had arrived in fall or winter, the first summer helped them to adjust and make the decision to stay. Many explained, that after the first year, they knew what to expect and how to prepare for the winter and darkness which helped them to feel better the next winter. They also had a personal experience by then that after the dark winter comes the sun and light. In the spring and summer Finns are also more outgoing and talkative which helped in the interactional adjustment. Further, there are examples of good beginnings too due to the good weather, such as the following: “When we came here, that was in August last year...it was fantastic weather. We had the first five weeks in an apartment in Helsinki so we saw then Helsinki and Finland from the best side, so of course we were just like wow this is beautiful and it was super nice and wow so that was a super start.”

#### Finnish values and safety

In addition to weather, many participants talked about safety and peacefulness. Safety was regarded as a major factor for the participants from countries where they had felt scared because of the culture or recent terrorist attacks. “We in our own country we don’t feel safe after a certain hour we can’t step out alone. Not just my husband don’t want me to, even I won’t go. You want to go out, go do it during the day, don’t step out after sunset because that is asking for trouble, something could go wrong.” described one spouse and there were several participants who came from an environment they considered unsafe. In these cases, it was evident that safety was the number one factor contributing to their general adjustment and everything else was secondary. In Finland they felt safe.

For the participants who came from an environment they perceived safe, the safety was not the most important factor influencing adjustment, but it was still appreciated by many. “The things we love here are that it’s safe, quiet...clean.” listed one expatriate couple and several others grouped together the peacefulness, silence and nature. In addition honesty, equality and wellbeing of individuals were valued. “The values of Finland I appreciate a lot, I have found out that for Finland the human being is the most important asset or the most important thing so everything, all the laws and all the details in the country is because of that, to protect the weaker, the youngest and that makes me happy. That makes my family happy.” described one spouse and added that when she has that point of view, the weather or the people not saying hi everywhere doesn’t matter.

### Food and health

Local food and possibilities to maintain health affected participant's adjustment when these factors were an essential part of the individual's personality or chosen lifestyle. Almost all participants wanted to maintain their health and had found their ways to these activities. They did some kind of sports such as went to gym, bicycling, walking or did some other exercise. For many it was part of their normal daily routines. Primarily exercising contributed to the participant's general adjustment, but it also played a role in the interactional adjustment. For example, going to the gym or just walking outside offered possibilities to get to know new people. Some had even made friends because of these activities.

Even though most of the participants were interested in exercising, some of them were surprised how active and outdoors people are and commented that it was much different than in their home country. For a few, the perceived emphasis on health and well-being was too central in Finland. They missed tasty food and cozy restaurants and felt that the Finnish food was only for nutrition. "In Finland food is kinda necessary to survive you know they get berries and mushrooms and that's really good and the food that we eat is very healthy and people are interested in well-being but the emphasis itself is on the whole body and well-being and the food is sort of not really a focus." described one spouse the absence of local food culture concentrating on taste. However, for most the food related difficulties in adjustment concerned finding certain products in the grocery stores which was a huge problem in the beginning but decreased considerably within a few months after arrival.

### Shopping and cost of living

Another difficulty in finding the right kind of products experienced by the participants was related to buying clothes and fashion. This was due to a general perception of different kind of clothing style than the person had used to or the lack of high fashion stores or clothes of larger size. For most these difficulties affect the general adjustment, but in some cases they have negative influence on interactional adjustment as well like one spouse described: "I'm a plus-sized woman and I find there's not really a plus-sized community here that I can kind of bounce ideas off with and there's not a lot of plus-sized shopping here so I kind of feel

isolated from the community that I was part of in [country X]...so that's a kind of problem... it's depressing."

However, most of the participants had found their ways to satisfy their shopping needs, but the price level was perceived high. Almost all commented that everything is more expensive and gave examples related to housing, groceries and vacations. To some, the high costs of living came as a surprise, but it had a major influence only on few participants' adjustment. It affected most in the families where the spouse was unwillingly unemployed.

#### Transportation and characteristics of the home town in Finland

Many participants mentioned the inexpensive public transportation. Several used buses and trains to go to work or move around and saw it as a big advantage that their children could use the public transportation to go to school and hobbies. To some the system made it possible to live their everyday-life without owning a car. In a larger context, several participants appreciated good connections to their home country. Some had moved to Finland due to its location closer to their original home country from another expatriate assignment. Similarly some who were now far away from their family and friends back home saw the long distance and big time difference as a disadvantage. This affected participants' general adjustment lowering the overall feeling of comfortability.

One more factor related to the geographical location of the expatriate assignment mentioned by the participants was the internationality of their home city in Finland. Those who lived outside the capital area mentioned that they found Helsinki more international than the city where they lived. One couple used an expression "sometimes we just suffer" because the city where they live is smaller, offers less things to do and the people in their city were perceived more closed by the expatriate couple. They liked to visit Helsinki, because it's more international and it's normal to have people from different countries. However, also several respondents living in capital area, both spouses and foreign workers, commented that they wanted the environment including the city, children's school etc. to be international. To some the current level of internationality was too low, particularly in the international schools. When the participants felt that the environment was less international that they would have wanted, it affected their general adjustment because they felt that they were outsiders and not perceived normal by others. In addition it had influence on interactional

adjustment, since some felt it would have been easier for them to interact with other expatriates.

#### Other general factors

Religion and celebrations were not discussed by the participants in relation to their adjustment process. Only one spouse referenced religion as a basis for her own values and one expatriate mentioned that he hasn't experienced the stereotype of Finns drinking a lot during the weekend. However, many little details of Finnish culture like sauna and local food such as rye bread and Easter pudding were mentioned over the discussions as part of the new life in the new environment. Those who felt that they were well adapted commented that once you have taken part in the local traditions and tried the local products you understand what's going on around you and feel like you're a part of the new culture. "Once we learned a little Finnish, we had some mämmi [easter pudding], studied some things, that's when it became our home." one expatriate concluded. Thus it is not solely the biggest and most evident factors that have influence on adjustment, but also the person's attitude towards trying new things and be involved in the new culture. Consequently, the personal factors affecting adjustment are discussed next.

#### **4.2.2 Personal and relational factors**

In addition to the general factors of the new location and its culture, the personal factors such as individual's own motivation and attitude towards living in the new environment as well as relational factors have influence on adjustment. Relational factors cover all interaction with other people such as getting to know local people, making friends and social ties to person's home country.

#### Earlier international experience

One common factor brought up by several participants was their earlier international experience. They reflected their experiences in Finland with those of earlier international assignments or justified some of their feelings with the lack of experience from relocation or other cultures. Those who listed several countries where they had lived earlier expressed e.g. that they "got used to it" or "we have no difficulty in adapting". Thus, the experience

from earlier international relocations helped in the adaptation because of the knowledge what to expect and how to deal with the practicalities and the emerging emotions.

On the other hand, the earlier experience seemed to complicate the process for some of the participants. Because they knew for example how they had been compensated at earlier assignments or how they had been satisfied with some parts of their lives at the previous location, they had more detailed expectations when they moved to Finland. Some had difficulties with different factors in Finland than they had had at earlier location(s) and those were perceived as a negative surprise. Whereas many of those to whom the move to Finland was the first international relocation had more overall look at the situation. If they were satisfied with the most prominent elements and had managed to organize their everyday-life according to their needs, they didn't comment on details of the culture or new location.

### Motivation

Regardless of whether the person had earlier international experience or not, the level and quality of motivation affected adjustment. Inevitably, expatriate's work was one of the motivations to move for all participants. For some, it was the only motivation they mentioned and to some it was the most important from several reasons behind the move. However, there were also participants to whom, the job or promotion was not the biggest motivation, but other personal desires. New experiences or new life was mentioned by many spouses as a motivation to move, several named safety of the country and good education or experiences for their children. Also some of the expatriates had non-work related motivations, like one expatriate explained: "We wanted to live in a different country because we wanted to live in a different country. It wasn't a huge promotion, it wasn't the best financial decision so because of that what we were going for was this experience, experience living in a foreign country and becoming better people and just going through this process so it's easier to see the positive side of these experiences because this is what we asked for". These kind of statements also reflected the attitude participants had towards the change and living in a new culture. The expatriate families who had other motivations for the move than solely the work assignment were more open to the changes and accepted the setbacks and difficulties as part of the process.



## Attitude

Closely related to motivation, the participants of this study had different kinds of viewpoints and attitudes concerning relocation and adjustment. Some of the spouses who came to Finland because of their husband's job felt that they have to adapt, that the decision to move was made without thinking about their own will and desires. Then it was not necessarily a personal choice and led to a need to get other more personal needs to be fulfilled in the new environment because the spouse felt she had made sacrifices because of the move. Whereas when the choice was made together and the spouse fulfilled her own dreams with the move as well, not only those of the husband, the spouses seemed better adapted. All in all, open attitude, positive thinking, persistence to try and not being afraid of the failures were mentioned as examples of the qualities that help in the adjustment process. "I've had a very good experience in Finland, I came here with the open mind to do things different that what I used to do. To do different things and to do things in a different way." explained one spouse." I mean it's just that you have to...you can't just sit at home alone and be miserable, you have to do stuff." said another. Individuals with these kind of attitudes were better prepared to confront the new.

Another aspect that helped in adjustment was participants' conscious policy of not trying to make Finland like their home country, but aiming to make the current environment the new normal. "Stop trying to change the world and the environment you're living in to something you're used to and start accepting it for what it is" as one expatriate advised. The persons with this view had managed to combine the most important elements of their own culture with those of the Finnish culture and found their ways to live comfortably in the new environment. Whereas those who tried to move their whole life to the new atmosphere mentioned several examples what they can't find in Finland that they had or were used to at home e.g. food, clothes and ways of interaction. The lack of too many familiar factors caused prolonged adjustment period or inability to adapt.

## Interaction with locals

The most popular topics discussed by the participants in this study were related to interactional adjustment. In addition to the local language discussed earlier these include e.g. interaction with locals and other expatriates, making friends as well as keeping in contact

with relatives and friends back home. When the spouses were asked about adjustment, most of them started to talk about these factors related to social activities and friendships and for many, they had major influence on their adjustment. Whereas all expatriates talked first about their job, but all of them discussed interaction as well. All the expatriates in the study were satisfied with their job, but the difficulties were in the area of interactional adjustment such as missing family back home or lack of friends in the new location. Interaction with locals was considered very important both at work and at free-time and it influenced the success of the adaptation to the new environment. Thus it affected all three dimensions of adjustment.

Typically Finns were described as friendly and helpful by the participants like one spouse explained: “I hear everybody says this, like we were so surprised that people were so friendly and that it was so nice to be here because we all heard these stereotypes that it’s cold and horrible and people are not friendly, they will never look at you or talk to you and they can’t speak English and it’s just all wrong. -- I think everybody’s nice here, everybody speaks English.” Many participants had similar experiences and found Finnish people helpful and easy to approach to ask for advice. Also neighbors were perceived as a comfort factor by many. They were important because the expatriate families were in a new situation surrounded by a lot of unfamiliarity and didn’t have their supportive network from home around them. Most participants were thankful for their neighbors, they brought safety and offered a possibility to ask help when needed. However, there were also opposite experiences. “I don’t see any of my neighbors, so that’s really different from what it was like in [country X].” explained one spouse.

In addition to getting to know their neighbors, the participants had found several means to be in contact with the locals. Several mentioned that having children enabled them to be involved in activities where they could meet local people. As the children grew older the parents’ networks also expanded from a group from kindergarten and preschool and then a new school etc. Also the children’s hobbies involved communication with other parents and thus getting to know even more people. Further, having a dog helped the participants to see local people, start conversations or just to talk to someone. “We don’t have kids so it was an excuse for people to look at me and talk to me and like be open to me because everybody smiles at a dog, it’s easy.” said one spouse and others had similar experiences. In addition, an own hobby helped to get to know local people. One had started singing in a Finnish

speaking choir, another was engaged in photographing and arts and further some others met other people when doing sports. Several found it beneficial to have some kind of reason or an excuse to start interacting with Finns, however one spouse commented that you don't necessarily even need one. "Just because nobody else starts talking to me it doesn't mean I can't start talking to somebody else." So it is also about the person's attitude.

### Interaction with other expatriates

Several participants in this study found it easier to get to know and meet other foreigners. Many were involved in some kind of international group either organized by expatriate's employer or children's school or based on some unifying factor like community of their nationality, international women's club or expatriate group. However, several mentioned that they didn't want to participate in those groups because they felt it was not for them. They didn't like the activities or thought that for example the same country of origin is not enough to feel as part of the group. Most important for many was to have social connections and networks, people around and persons to ask advice when needed. Several agreed that it is beneficial to meet people from other cultures and many felt that they had active enough social life, however the problem of getting friends was common. "I haven't found anyone that I want to spend more time than it's necessary." commented one expatriate and one spouse explained: "You have to have some things in common, it's not because you speak [same language] you can be friends, you need some other things." The problem of not getting friends and experiences how to make good friends in the new environment is discussed next.

### Making friends

According to this study, having friends was very important and one of the most critical factors contributing to adjustment. It was a subject the participants talked about a lot. The comments varied from: "That's the big problem here, no friends" to "I have a lot of friends". Those who had friends described how they spent their days going to cafés or for lunch with friends, chatting, walking or experiencing new things with their friends, some had dinners or little trips together during weekends. Many expressed that they had found a likeminded person to hang out with or do activities related to their shared interests. Then again those who didn't have friends or had too few of them missed out all that, felt blue and lonely.

Getting friends was important to both spouses and expatriates. Having a job didn't reduce the importance of friends among spouses, but some of the expatriates accepted the lack of friends better than spouses. "It's a price you pay to a certain degree when you're an expat is that your social life is different than when you were living at the place where you have grown up or where you are surrounded with people that you're going to the university" explained one expatriate the compromises made between the new experiences and active social life. Still some had made friends at work or through their husband's job. But not all acquaintances from work were considered as real friends, most of the friendships were formed outside work.

Several mentioned that getting friends is a slow process and some found it difficult. Even though they had people to socialize with, they perceived the relationships were distant. Some explained that having children helped them to get friends whereas others found it more difficult, especially if their kids were small. Some felt that they were lacking of opportunities where they could establish friendships. Those who had active social life explained that you just have put a lot of effort in meeting people: to do different things, join various organizations, accept invitations to events and start talking to strangers. After getting involved in many activities it is possible to choose the ones to join again and eventually end up getting friends. However, people have different kinds of personalities and some participants found it hard to find the right places for interaction. Whatever the reason for not getting friends in Finland, it made the person miss more the friends and family back home.

#### Social ties to home country

Many participants, both expatriates and their spouses missed their relatives and close friends back home. The overall adjustment didn't seem to effect the longing. Many of those who were satisfied and well-adjusted to living in Finland still missed their family back home very much as did some of those who were dissatisfied and felt that their adaptation process is still in progress or who even regretted the move. Many expatriates felt that not having the friends and family from their home country around was the biggest negative factor influencing their adjustment. "That's what I'm telling everyone that only thing I miss from [country X] is the family and friends" as one expatriate put it. Naturally the family and closest friends are something that cannot be replaced, but there are ways to cope with the longing better.

The technologies e.g. Skype enabling long distance communication was seen beneficial by several participants, but especially the spouses felt that actually being in the same place with the close people was important. They appreciated the possibilities to visit friends and family back home or having them as guests in Finland. Aging parents or grown-up children living in another country caused the biggest concern. In addition to the possibilities and convenient connections to meet the important and loved persons, already the planning of the visits helped to cope with the longing. When the next gathering with the family from home was in the calendar, it was something good to look forward to and made miss them less.

#### **4.2.3 Organizational factors**

The third theme investigated in this thesis involves organizational factors which influence the work dimension of adjustment. Organizational adjustment is mostly related to the expatriate's job. Only a few of the spouses who participated in this study worked. Many didn't even want to work, but some were unwillingly unemployed. Anyway, the new role of the spouse affects their adjustment and thus the experiences related to unemployment / employment of the spouse are discussed first in this chapter followed by the factors related to work adjustment of expatriates.

##### Employment status of the spouse

The employment status, meaning unemployment or employment, of the spouse is a manifold and complex factor that has different kind of influence to different individuals and expatriate families. In this study some of the spouses worked and the others didn't work outside home. Those who worked, wanted to work because of financial reasons, to keep themselves busy or to maintain their professional competency or all of these. All the spouses who worked expressed that they were lucky to get a job. Otherwise they didn't talk much about the work. Then again the spouses who didn't work had either decided not to work or they were unemployed against their own will. Further those who had decided not to work were either happy as a stay at home spouse and didn't talk about going to work in the future or they felt bad about giving up their own career.

For those who had worked before, the current role as a non-working spouse aroused negative feelings related to a perception of reduced self-worth and frustration like the following

comments from spouses demonstrate: “You just can’t feel like the only purpose you have is to sit around and clean the house or there’s some women who like that, I’m not one of them.” said one and another explained: “For me the hardest thing about moving here was after been a fiercely independent happy feminist, I had my own bank account, I’d been working since 16 and you move here and you’re like oh you’re a traveling spouse, that’s officially what you’re called. And you’re not allowed your own bank account, you just have this kind of pretend kid’s card with your husband’s credit.” Some were angry and disappointed still, like one spouse put it: “It’s like why the hell did I go to the university if I’m just going to be a goddamn housewife, like I spent all this goddamn time and money and effort to get a degree and now I’m just sitting on my ass rotting.”

For those who were relatively happy with their situation as a non-working spouse giving up their career still caused mixed feelings, but they explained that the family is the most important and worth compromising their own career. Some others rationalized that now they have to enjoy the life without work, because they had to give up their career. “At the end of the day you will have to enjoy because you have that time, that freedom of going for a coffee, going to the gym, buying, shopping or whatever you want to do. You are restricted to a time frame when you work and now you have the time to travel around.” was a descriptive comment about the positive sides of not being involved in working life. The encouragement to enjoy life without work was emphasized also by many expatriates to their spouses. Or it was an unofficial agreement within the family that the husband works and the spouse takes care of the home and children. However, several spouses felt guilty to have this kind of freedom. They were involved in working life by doing business online, freelancing or engaged themselves in voluntary work because they didn’t feel comfortable solely staying at home but couldn’t work fulltime either.

Still many spouses kept applying for jobs. For some it was important for financial reasons. Especially if they went from a two income family down to one income, the unemployment of the spouse caused discomfort, inflexibility and the need to constantly watch the expenditures. But it was also about being a type of person who likes to be involved which was common to several spouses. “It’s not just about working it’s about wanting to feel like you’re part of the society and giving back. I think that’s something that people need.” expanded one spouse.

The difficulties in getting a job was mentioned by many participants. The most often mentioned reason was inadequate Finnish language skills. “You really need to know Finnish very well in order to get almost any kind of job” stated one spouse and explained that Finnish language skills were required also to volunteer. Another common problem in not getting a job that the participants mentioned was the current economic situation in the whole world that affects Europe and Finland as well. Despite these difficulties, several spouses mentioned that they have some kind of job or are involved in volunteering. Still the organizational adjustment was discussed mainly from the perspective of the expatriate or how the spouse saw her husband’s adjustment to work.

#### Expatriate’s work adjustment

All the expatriates involved in this study had adapted well to their work organization and were satisfied with their job. “Work life has absolutely met and potentially also exceeded my expectations, I love my job it’s fantastic.” praised one expatriate and others had similar experiences. Similarly several spouses described that their husbands are satisfied with their work. “He’s professionally very happy, doing well and very busy” stated one spouse. In addition to the work as such, several mentioned that the expatriates worked with the same people as before or knew already some of the people from their work which was seen as a positive factor related to organizational adjustment.

Another factor that affected adjustment to work positively was the similarity of the working culture at the new location and that of the previous job. This was particularly evident if the expatriate continued to work for the same company like one participant presented: “As long as you have been with the company for many years and you are at the level that I am it’s kind of, the adjustment coming to different countries is very easy because it’s the same, culture is the same, values are pretty much the same. It’s the same agenda in all of the countries so that has been easy.” However, the similarities were noticed and found helpful also when the company changed.

Interestingly, even though the similarity of working cultures was seen positive, still the differences in the ways of working were regarded as an improvement compared to the expatriate’s earlier work. Especially, the emphasis on group dynamic in Finnish organizations compared to more individualistic work cultures was appreciated. Also more

reasonable working hours were seen as an improvement. However, at the same time the amount of working hours was the most contradictory topic among the participants. The numbers mentioned by the expatriates and their spouses ranged from the regular 8 hours to 10-12 hours a day mentioned by many and further there were those who worked from morning until midnight or travelled often for business. Some said that the expatriate in the family works less than before the relocation whereas some others stated that the working days were longer than previously. Then again there was a division between those who worked a lot, but had always done so, so it was not a change caused by the international assignment and those, who were “family men” as one spouse put it, who did their job, but came home early and spent time with their family as well.

Those who worked moderate or reasonable hours had their life in better balance than those who worked long hours. In the families where the expatriate worked a lot, the spouses felt sometimes lonely or they were disappointed to the lack of time together with their partner. Several felt that they would have wanted to do more together at week days than just eat dinner and going to sleep. In addition the spouses whose husbands worked long days expressed that they wished their partners had more energy on weekends to do something together with their families and not solely recover from the work week. Further effects the family members have on each other’s adjustment are discussed next.

### **4.3 The influence family members have on each other’s adjustment**

This chapter aims at elaborating the effects different family members have on other members’ adjustment and thus at answering the second research question: *How do the adjustment and satisfaction / dissatisfaction of the spouse affect the adjustment and satisfaction of the foreign worker?*

#### **4.3.1 Family as a unit**

To begin with, it is important to note that the term expatriate family refers to a versatile group of families. Those who participated in this study included young couples without children, families with one or more children where the age of the children varied from 1 to 20+ years and couples whose children were adults living by themselves. Thus there are



different kinds of factors involved that influence individual's adjustment depending on the family situation.

The couples without children expressed that they are more free to do their decisions as one spouse explained: "He knows I can go to any place. Since we don't have the children with us anymore it's easier because we don't need a school so that's different. -- now it's up to you. If he's ok with a job I have to adapt." On the other hand, the children were seen as a resource in the adjustment process. The couples without children said that it was easier to get to know people and have friends when they still had children with them. Also they brought more activities and busy schedule. The participants who had small children described their everyday-life revolving around taking care of the kids and as far as they had that organized smoothly, they didn't have difficulties in adapting to the new environment. Whereas the spouses whose children had grown up and moved away from home felt more emotionally dependent on their husband and needed more activities to fill their days.

The participants who had school-aged children discussed a lot about the issues related to children's school, hobbies and friendships. The bigger changes in the children's lives such as leaving the old friends in the middle of the school year or applying to university in a new location caused the most stress for the spouses. They seemed to spend a lot of time and energy to facilitate the adjustment of their children. However, the children have various difficulties at different stages of their lives that could happen anywhere and thus the problems are not necessarily related to the new environment. "I think it's also the age and they have to go through these things and maybe this would've happened if we never moved out" commented one spouse her teenager's problems. Anyhow, the spouses worked on these difficulties and enabled the expatriates to concentrate on their work.

In general, by most of the participants, the family was seen as one unit where different members made efforts for each other's wellbeing. For example the following expressions were used: "Family life is a package deal", "I think family is the most important" and "we were all on board and that was fine". One spouse further elaborated the strength of the family when things don't go as planned and there is a need to adapt to the changes and keep moving ahead: "That's another big part of why we can just kind of roll with the punches, like ok something's coming but we'll figure it out, it's all going to work out and just have faith that things are going to work and we'll figure it out together." Consequently, the family was seen

as one unit that had to confront the new and adjust in foreign environment and in this process the experiences and behavior of one member affected others. Individual members set off demands for other members, such as the requirement for the spouse to take care of the children because of the husband's job. But the individuals of a family were also resources to each other for example by providing mental support.

#### **4.3.2 Family member effects**

Since the family is seen as one entity, unit or package by the participants, the behavior, feelings and experiences of one family member affect other members. Children's feelings were brought up by several participants. They wanted their kids to be happy, get friends and adapt to the school. However they added that it is important that mother is happy too. Further, the spouses put effort in supporting their husbands. The findings related to family member effects in each three dimensions of adjustment are presented next.

##### Spouse's influence on expatriate's work adjustment

The happiness of the spouse was emphasized particularly in the families where the spouse had made a lot of compromises because of her husband's job. "It has to be give and take because I quit my job and left everything for him to do this career and at some point you just have to complain a little bit." explained one spouse. Several others commented as well that they had experienced negative feelings like frustration, boredom and loneliness. The spouse's experiences affected the expatriates as well. Several mentioned that expatriates felt bad to come home from work and see their wife miserable at home. The unhappiness of the spouse affected expatriates negatively as one expatriate stated: "I think there's no doubt that the spouse's happiness would make the working person's life easier as well, no doubt." Consequently, an evident finding of this study is that the satisfaction / dissatisfaction of the spouse affects the satisfaction of the foreign worker. This effect covered all three dimensions of adjustment: general, interactional and work adjustment.

The overall adjustment of the spouse thus had influence on expatriate's work adjustment. The unhappiness of the spouse affected expatriate's job negatively for example by reducing the working capacity. The again, if the spouse was happy, the expatriate could work comfortably. The importance of making the relocation a positive experience for the whole

family was emphasized to enable everyone to function well. Further, the expatriates were able put extra effort to their work if they had a supportive and happy spouse at home. Because of the spouse they had the freedom to work long hours and travel for business when they needed because they didn't have to worry about their children and home. They said it is easy to stay a couple of hours longer each day because they like their job. However, they wanted their spouse to be happy, otherwise they felt they were misusing the person they loved. When they were in doubt whether the spouse was happy or not they started to think more about their obligation as a husband and as a father and consider more critically if the extra hours were necessary. All in all, the overall adjustment of the spouse had strong influence on expatriate's work adjustment including job satisfaction, work motivation and efficiency at work. This effect was not limited to families with children.

Similarly the spouse's feelings affected also expatriates without children. They felt guilty for being excited about the work when the wife was unhappy. For many expatriates it was easy to adapt to their work, they were enjoying it quite soon after the relocation, interacting with other people at work all day and even getting friends there. If the wife was unhappy and lonely at home the expatriate felt he had to be less excited. It was difficult as one expatriate put it: "to know that you're maybe bringing pain to somebody you care about". This finding further confirms the effect the spouse's happiness and satisfaction have on the foreign worker. The difficulties in spouse's adaptation influenced negatively on expatriate's work satisfaction and motivation. Thus again, the linkage between the overall adjustment of the spouse and the work adjustment of the expatriate was strong.

However, all of the expatriate families involved in this study seemed to have found their ways to handle the difficult situations and support each other over time. Communication played an important role in resolving the issues as well as being aware of each other's needs. "It's just communication, you have to be willing to talk about the good things and the bad things and you have to face it together, I mean it has to be a team effort." explained one expatriate. Keeping each other happy was emphasized by many and to succeed in that expatriate couples had established their "own systems" which varied a lot depending on the family. One spouse had agreed with her husband that he will take care of the cooking and kids on the weekends while she was responsible for the housework during the weeks. Similarly other families had found their ways to keep everyone in the family happy and allow the expatriate to perform well at work. For some it was arranging outside help and company

for the spouse while the expatriate was on business trip, possibility for the spouse to travel with the expatriate, timing the business trips so that there were not too many nights in a row or to others it was enabling the visits to see old friends and family back home or something else.

#### Family support in general adjustment

In addition to the above mentioned spouse's support for expatriate's work adjustment, different family members helped each other in general adjustment. In many families, it was the spouse who facilitated the adaptation to general elements of the new environment such as food and transportation. Several participants commented that the spouse took the other members of the family to see different places, to try out different activities and knew how to use for example the public transportation system. In addition the individuals of a family supported each other mentally when confronting the new and tried out the habits or features of the new culture together such as tasted local food, went to sauna or participated in celebrations. Further, the husband's job or more precisely the people at his work contributed to the general adjustment by introducing elements of the local culture and offering advice in everyday related issues the family had in the new environment. Consequently, the expatriate could help his family in general adjustment due to the support, advice and networks he had at work.

#### Family support in interactional adjustment

In addition to family members' support for each other in general adjustment and everyday-duties related to it, performance at work and overall happiness, the individuals contributed to each other's interactional adjustment. First, the spouses played a big role in organizing family activities for weekends and planning and booking holidays to enable the expatriates to relax and the whole family to spend time together. Several expatriates mentioned that since it was so hectic at work, they wanted to be with the family and relax on their free-time. Second, most of the spouses facilitated the expatriate's social life on free-time and helped them in getting friends. Thus an essential finding of this study is that the spouses commonly have a strong influence on expatriates' interactional adjustment by facilitating their social activities.

Several spouses described that on the free-time their husbands met solely or for the most part the people the wives had made friends with. They visited other expatriate or local families of the spouse's friends, went out for a dinner or did something else. "So life is connected to the friends that my wife has got." stated one expatriate and confirmed that most of his social life outside work comes through his wife. "I think that it has been a big help if I compare it to if I'd been here alone" emphasized the expatriate the importance of the help his wife has provided organizing the social life and building friendships. Also the children and having a dog as a family member helped in getting in interaction with other people as mentioned earlier.

Third, family members helped each other to keep in contact with the family and friends back home. In the families where the expatriate missed his friends and family from the original home country, even desperately sometimes, the wife put a lot of effort in planning and organizing to have those guests for a visit or arranging a trip for the expatriate family to see the people they care about. On the other hand, in some families it was the spouse who had a stronger need to see her parents, grownup children or friends in other countries and again the whole family put effort in making that possible. However, it is not solely the family itself and the members of it who can facilitate the interactional adjustment or provide all the needed support for all members. Companies can also help a lot in all the dimensions of the adjustment process and thus factors related to organizational support are discussed next.

#### **4.4 Organizational support**

This chapter lists and describes the forms of support that helped the participants in the adjustment process and indicates additional services the interviewees would find beneficial. Thus this chapter aims at answering the third research question: *What forms of support can organizations provide to improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses?*

First, all the beneficial forms of organizational support mentioned by the participants are listed in table 7 and then the most common forms are discussed in more detail.

<b>Form of support</b>	<b>Received by the participants (yes/no)</b>
Pre-departure training	No
Support in immigration	Yes
Arranging housing	Yes
Help in everyday duties (e.g. grocery shopping)	Yes
Culture training	No
Language courses	Yes
Career assistance for the spouses	No
Involvement in groups and clubs	Yes and no
Help in maintaining relationship with spouse (e.g. child care services)	No
Contact person	Yes

**Table 7: Beneficial forms of organizational support**

#### **4.4.1 Support in immigration**

Several participants mentioned the easy paperwork at the time of their arrival in Finland, especially those who had earlier experience in living abroad. “It’s probably the easiest and fastest relocation we did.” commented one expatriate from Europe and many others had similar experience. However, those who came from outside EU named housing and administrative paperwork the biggest pieces where they received help in the relocation process. They felt that they could not have had it done without help. All support in administrative matters had positive influence on expatriate families’ general adjustment.

#### **4.4.2 Arranging housing**

The support related to immigration was valued because of the practical reasons. The expatriate families saved time and energy for other activities because they received help with official documents. However, the help and support related to finding a home had stronger and broader meaning for the participants in this study. The participants commonly talked about their home referring to the house or apartment in Finland and the importance of it when asked about the factors that helped in the adjustment process. An apparent finding of this study is that the expatriate families, especially spouses see their home as a foundation for the new life in a new environment and thus the support related to finding the right kind

of home is very important. The participants explained that it is easier to confront the new when you have your own comfort zone, a place where you feel safe and familiar. This is how one spouse described the importance of finding the right kind of home: “If I don’t get a good start I don’t feel happy and it starts with my home. If I’m not happy in my house it doesn’t matter if I’m socializing every day or not, if I’m coming to a place where I’m not happy it doesn’t give me a comfortable feeling”.

The help and support in finding a home was valued most of all the forms of organizational support that the participants had received. “It’s a matter of finding a house of your choice, that’s it. I think that’s where the company makes it comfortable.” stated one spouse. In addition to the help in finding a comfortable place to call home, the participants appreciated the support in choosing a location with access to easy transportation systems and convenient distance to the important places such as children’s school. They expressed that it would have been hard to accomplish without local expertise. Similarly the support in communication related to booking the visits to see the apartments and acquiring additional information about them was found helpful especially due to the language and to save time. Further the support in checking and signing the rental contracts was appreciated. Consequently the support in arranging housing had a strong influence on expatriate families’ general adjustment, but it was also a mediating factor for other dimensions since the home was perceived as a basis for the adaptation process. Ideal location helped in work adjustment and the close neighbors in interactional adjustment. In this study, all the participants were thankful and satisfied with the housing support they had received.

#### **4.4.3 Career assistance for spouses**

The lack of career assistance was the most obvious shortcoming in the support services offered to expatriate families according to the findings of this research. Not all the spouses were aiming to have a job in Finland, so this type of support is not applicable for all expatriate families. However, to those families who had dual income before the move or to the spouses who wanted to work for some other reason, the help in getting a job was one of the forms of support they needed most. None of the spouses had got employed with help from organizations. Those who were working, had managed to find their job by personal contacts or other individual means.

In addition, several spouses mentioned that the difficulties in getting employed came as a surprise to them. They expressed that there was a lack of prior information or misleading information about the Finnish job market for spouses. Thus proper prior knowledge of the possibilities for spouses to work and support in finding a job would be important additional services to offer to assist spouses in their adaptation. In addition a service that would connect foreign job seekers with companies who want international employees was suggested. Further some of the spouses said that they were lacking information and practical advice on entrepreneurship and freelancing. This type of support could be offered by providing info packages or guiding to contact appropriate organizations, but also by connecting the spouses to talk about these issues with each other. Already at the focus group discussions performed for this study the spouses shared their knowledge related to setting up own business. Similar kind of support to get in touch with other people was asked for by many participants.

#### **4.4.4 Involvement in groups and clubs**

Interaction-related aspects of adjustment were regarded as the most important for many spouses regardless of their career orientation. As stated earlier, the interactional adjustment is the most important of the three dimensions of adjustment according to the findings of this research. Thus any kind of help in getting to know local people or other expatriates and making friends was found vital by most of the participants. They suggested that companies could direct them to different activities and hobbies and organize events where they could meet other people from different nationalities and share experiences. “To provide some way to make some connections --Just to facilitate some of the social aspects of adjusting” as one spouse put it. A few spouses had experienced this kind of support provided by their husband’s employer and found it very beneficial or even “invaluable” or “a blessing” as some described. The support these companies offered included for example setting up gatherings for spouses where they could meet each other informally. By being in these events, the participants had made friends that they now see also without the help of the company. Those spouses who hadn’t been invited to this type of events said that they would like to participate in gatherings for spouses. The event where the focus group discussion was held was mentioned as a good example of the type of gathering they would like to participate also in the future to meet with other expatriate spouses, share contact details and discuss their experiences.



#### **4.4.5 Contact person**

Similar experiences were also mentioned as an advantage related to a contact person at a new location. “That was, I think one of the most important pieces of our transition. Somebody who understands both sides” described one expatriate the significance of a competent contact person. Some of the issues where the help of destination consultant was appreciated were common to most of the participants such as opening bank accounts, taking insurances, dealing with tax authorities and opening phone contracts. Whereas others were more specific to individual needs such as obtaining driver’s license, arranging children’s hobbies, importing pets or something else. Since many of the affairs the families need to organize in the new environment are unique to that family, a personal destination consultant who to contact when needed was the form of support most commonly brought up by the participants.

However, it was not necessarily the competence and experience of the contact person that mattered most, but having a person(s) to ask questions – even the stupidest ones. The participants had needed help for example in a situation where they had locked themselves out of their apartment, in a grocery store trying to find something specific or they needed personal advice on how to go to the doctor. In these kind of situations they felt it was extremely important to know someone who they could comfortably contact and ask for help. Thus it was crucial for the participants’ adjustment not only to have a proficient destination consultant to assist with the paperwork and finding a house or helping with the job search and getting involved in social activities, but also to have a named contact person to ask questions even long after the relocation when needed. It was unclear to some of the participants how long they could still ask help even if they had an assigned destination consultant in the beginning.

The contact person was also one of the biggest determinants of the perceived quality of the support. Some expatriates said that their employer didn’t understand their situation whereas the destination consultant from relocation agency understood their situation and was able to provide right kind of support. The spouses shared a similar opinion and the fact that most of the participants didn’t have their regular support system such as relatives and friends around further highlighted the importance of a trustful person to contact. “She was like an angel sent

from heaven, for someone who had no clue what they were doing” described one spouse the importance of their destination consultant.

#### **4.4.6 Other forms of support**

Other forms of organizational support mentioned by participants included language courses and pre-departure and cultural training. The language courses were found beneficial by some spouses, but others felt that they were inadequate, of poor quality or that the organization of the courses made their job search more difficult. They expressed that an expedited learning schedule would help in applying for jobs. The lack of cultural training was also mentioned in relation to spouses’ employment. Further additional support service mentioned was help in maintaining the relationship between the expatriate and the spouse. This includes for example child care services since for many, the close relatives such as grandparents lived far away and could not help the expatriate family.

#### **4.4.7 Feeling of being cared for**

All in all, the expatriates and their spouses were happy and thankful for all the support they had received. The good experiences related to help in immigration and finding a house produced a feeling that the organization values the individuals. A contact person was also a central contributor to the participants’ perceived feeling of being cared for. ”Actually you can develop almost a friendship or a close relationship with them and you get support more, not only like information but you can really feel like they care about you and it’s very important.” explained one spouse. In addition, the feeling of being cared for was a result of the attitudes towards the person and several little things, not only offering the most common forms of support listed above. Even, all the participants were satisfied with the organizational support services they had received, still some mentioned that they felt that the companies just transferred the expatriates, but didn’t take the spouse into consideration. “It would just be nice throughout the process for people to show that they actually cared about me or acknowledged that I was coming along” hoped one spouse. This would include paying attention to the spouse and her needs and offering help for her in the issues she finds important. Facilitating involvement in groups and clubs as well as offering career assistance for spouses are examples of acknowledging the spouse.

Mostly the feeling of being cared for was related to the ways the persons were treated, what kind of support they received and how the practicalities related to everyday-life were organized. However, some also mentioned the financial issues and compensation packages. If the spouse was not financially compensated by the expatriate's employer she felt that the company didn't value her and didn't care about her career interruption and other sacrifices she had made because of the husband's job. Similarly several other monetary compensations such as the housing contribution was perceived too low and thus it was not possible to have the same standard of living as before the move which made the persons feel less cared for.

## **5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter the findings of this study will be summarized, discussed and compared with earlier research. As many earlier studies (e.g. Tung 1981; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Andreason, 2003) indicate, spouse and family issues are of high importance to the success of expatriate assignments. Despite the evidence that a major problem related to overseas assignments is the inability of the expatriate's spouse to adjust, the spouse's viewpoint is scarcely investigated. Thus this research aimed at complementing previous research by interviewing foreign workers' spouses and foreign workers themselves willing to talk about their individual experiences and family relationships.

To begin with, this study confirms the demanding role of expatriate's spouse brought up in earlier research. Andreason (2008) among others points out that the adaptation to a new living environment can be challenging to everyone, but the expatriate's spouse has a more difficult role in a new situation than the other family members. Most of the participants involved in this study share this view. All the expatriates were well adapted and satisfied with their work, the organizational culture was familiar or easy to adjust, working kept them busy, made them feel as a part of the community and offered interaction with colleagues every day. Whereas most of the spouses had to find new ways to keep occupied and meet people and learn to conduct their everyday-lives in an unfamiliar environment. In addition, many of the spouses had to learn how to cope with their new role as a stay at home spouse instead of being employed.

According to Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2012), Global Relocation Trends 2012 Survey, the most significant reasons for assignment failures are related to either career or family. Similarly, according to Ivancevich (2007), there is empirical evidence that the family influences most the adaptation of expatriates to a new environment and thus to the success of an assignment. The findings of this research don't include any negative issues related to expatriate's career, but confirm the effect of family issues to expatriate assignments. Further, this research supports the earlier knowledge of adjustment being a complex phenomenon and shows that several factors influence adjustment.

## **5.1 Several factors influence multidimensional adjustment**

To answer to the first research question: "*What kind of factors influence adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses in Finland?*" the factors related to adjustment as perceived by the participants were divided in three themes: general and cultural factors, personal and relational factors as well as organizational factors. The overall perception of adjustment was described gradual by the participants in this study. Thus it followed the upward linear model of adjustment described by e.g. Black & Mendenhall (1991) and not the more commonly used U-Curve theory with honeymoon period and culture shock (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Ivancevich, 2007). Consequently, according to this research many of the factors influencing adjustment are perceived difficult at first but over time, people adapt to them.

The findings of this study related to all the three themes extend the previous research by giving more detailed information about the factors influencing adjustment. Further the findings increase the understanding of the effects the different factors have on expatriate families. Next, the findings of this study will be summarized and discussed theme by theme starting with general and cultural factors.

### **5.1.1 General and cultural factors**

First the findings concerning general and cultural factors emerged from this study are listed in Table 8 including examples of participants' experiences related to each factor.

General and cultural factors		
Factor	Description	Example quote
Local language	Finnish and Swedish, but most Finns speak also English.	<p>“It’s a super complicated language”</p> <p>” It’s just the thing that I’m not sure if I have quite accepted that I will never be able to understand what the people around me are actually talking about.”</p> <p>“In fact everybody speaks English so it’s not a problem”</p>
Local ways of communication	Direct, but polite. Scarce small talk.	<p>“The small talk issue, I mean we learned very quickly that if we were in a store and we were asking someone for help, you know just stick to the basics.”</p> <p>“They are so straightforward”</p>
Weather	Four seasons. Dark and cold in winter time, light and warm during summer	<p>“November was horrible, we’d been here maybe five months and it was dark and nobody wanted to talk and I think that was probably the worst month for me.”</p> <p>“It’s better now because it’s light and it’s warm”</p>
Finnish values and safety	Safe country, respect for privacy and values individuals	<p>“The values of Finland I appreciate a lot”</p> <p>“Quiet, you feel safe.”</p>
Food and health	Typical food includes e.g. berries, mushrooms and rye bread. Emphasis on health.	<p>“The food that we eat is very healthy and people are interested in well-being”</p> <p>“So many times we were in the grocery store and we were like what is this or there were some things specific I was looking for and I just couldn’t find.”</p>
Shopping and cost of living	Higher price level than in most of the other European countries	“The costs of living are high, so rental is high, groceries are expensive, vacations are expensive...”
Transportation and characteristics of the home town in Finland	Well-functioning public transportation system. Small cities.	”So easy transportation system and it’s quite cheap. -- Public transport is good so that’s something we like also.”

**Table 8: General and cultural factors**

To begin with, this study confirms the important role of local language in adjustment process. The findings of this research support the statement of earlier research (e.g. Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) that inadequate language skills can cause misunderstandings and confusion. The participants described uncomfortable experiences while running errands such as not understanding the signs as well as situations at public places where they first had to admit that they didn't speak Finnish before they could participate the world around them or build social ties. These kind of experiences complicate general and interactional adjustment. For some, not knowing the language is even the only factor why they don't feel completely like home. In addition, Finnish language skills are considered vital in applying a job, which has negative impact on organizational adjustment. However, the ability to have almost everything done in English decreases the discomfort caused by not knowing the local language. All in all, according to the findings of this research local language has influence on all three dimensions of adjustment: general, interactional and work adjustment.

In addition to local language, the findings of this study show that the weather plays a distinctive role in adjustment process. It is a factor determining how the person feels. Sunny and warm weather with lots of light make happy and help in the adjustment process whereas darkness and cold weather make the persons feel miserable and complicate their adaptation. The darkness and harsh weather has negative influence on the participants' general adjustment, but also on interactional adjustment. Several spouses mentioned that nobody wanted to talk to them in the first winter, they felt lonely and had fights with their husband. Many felt alone and scared and missed back home. Vice versa the good weather and light help in general and interactional adjustment. Then the Finns are perceived to be more active and outgoing which help in forming social ties and the person's themselves feel happier and more comfortable. The strong influence of weather is not evident in previous research which can possibly be explained with Finland's unique location and climate.

Further, this study found several other common general and cultural factors such as Finnish values, safety, food, health, cost of living, shopping, transportation and internationality. But the importance of each of these depend on the individual's personality, own values and lifestyle. When the factor e.g. shopping and fashion is a big part of the person's life, the difficulties related to not getting that part fulfilled in Finland has a strong influence on the person's general adjustment, but also on the interactional adjustment since the now lacking factor has been a unifying element in building social ties previously.

Finally, an overarching finding related to general and cultural factors of this study suggests that the novelty of culture does not determine the success of adaptation. Several researchers (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Black et al. 1991; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) state that one of the most common non-work factor that affects adjustment is the novelty of the culture and indicate that the more the culture at the destination differs from that of one's home country the more insecurity the person feels about how to behave and cope in the foreign environment which leads to difficulties in adaptation. However, the findings of this research don't confirm that statement. Rather it is the opposite. The participants from more distant cultures seemed to be better adjusted than those coming from more similar environments. For those coming from different cultures, the biggest differences were usually towards positive direction, improving their quality of life and satisfaction and not decreasing or lowering adjustment. In addition, different individuals from same country of origin had somewhat opposite experiences compared to each other after moving to Finland. So the cultural similarity or dissimilarity was unlikely the most common or even strong determinant of the success of the adaptation according to the findings of this study. In turn, the findings support the statement made by Yijälä et al. (2012) that there are also studies that have not confirmed the link between cultural distance and adaptation (e.g. Tung, 1998), but successful adaptation is more likely achieved because of the person's ability to fit into the new culture. Thus personal factors influencing adjustment are discussed next.

### **5.1.2 Personal and relational factors**

The second group of factors identified in this study includes personal and relational factors. These elements impact the overall adjustment experienced by individuals and have more specific influence on general and interactional adjustment. These factors are listed in Table 9: Personal and relational factors including examples of participants' experiences related to each factor.

<b>Personal and relational factors</b>		
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
Earlier international experience	The person has / has not lived in another foreign country before moving to Finland	"I think we got used to it [after] quite a lot of moves"
Motivation	Reasons behind the relocation	"My husband's job." "New experiences"
Attitude	Attitude towards the move and other cultures	"I came here with the open mind to do things different than what I used to do."
Interaction with locals	Communication and social activities with Finnish people	"I think everybody's nice here, everybody speaks English." "The less social kind of culture in public places or where you might talk to a stranger, that doesn't happen as much"
Interaction with other expatriates	Communication and social activities with other than Finnish people	"Most of the people that he socializes out of the work is my friends because I make friends with other expats like me so we have dinners at home or we go out for dinner or whatever so when we have time for that we socialize with my friends"
Making friends	Establishing deeper and longer lasting social ties and having friends	"Life is connected to the friends that my wife has got" "The friendship takes a little longer to develop."
Social ties to home country	Contacts with family and friends back home e.g. parents and grown-up children	"Still miss a lot of the people from home. More family than friends, I think that's something that we can't replace here."

**Table 9: Personal and relational factors**

To begin with, the impact of previous international experience on adjustment was not as straightforward according to the findings of this study as it is described by earlier research. According to Black & Stephens (1989) previous international experience has an important role in the adjustment process but this research suggests that the role is ambiguous. On the one hand, it helps in the adaptation because of the knowledge what to expect and how to deal with the practicalities and the emerging emotions. But on the other hand, the earlier experience seems to complicate the process due to more detailed expectations. Further, for those participants who didn't have earlier international experience many features of the new



culture and the ways they had managed to organize their lives in the new environment came as a positive surprise and facilitated adjustment. These kind of remarks are also connected to values. Even when the cultural difference was big, the individuals associated themselves rather with the Finnish values than those at their country of origin or previous home country. This finding confirms the statements from existing literature (Tartakovsky & Schwartz, 2001; Yijälä et al., 2012) that people may have the motivation to relocate because the values at the destination are different from their home country, but similar to their own personal values which reduces the difficulties in adaptation to a new society.

Further, the findings of this study support the statements made in the existing literature (Black & Stephens, 1989) about the person's attitudinal qualities such as tolerance for unfamiliar as well as attitudes towards other cultures having an influence on adjustment in a foreign environment. This research shows that those who are well adapted have open attitude. They take part in local traditions and try local products and thus learn to understand what's going on around them and finally feel like they are a part of the new culture.

In addition to overall adjustment, attitudes and other personal factors affect interactional adjustment according to the findings of this study. Further, the findings of this research support the argument made by Storey et al. (2009) that successful expatriates put effort in getting to know new people and being involved in social activities. However, it is important to remember that people have different kinds of personalities and the person's own effort is not always enough. In this research the most popular topics discussed by the participants were related to interactional adjustment which is in line with the findings of Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) that highlight the importance of relationships and bring forth the difficulties in making new friends, establishing close and deeper friendships as well as challenges in keeping touch with the family and old friends back home. For most of the spouses in this study, the factors related to social activities and friendships have the biggest influence on their adjustment. Difficulties in social life or lack of it is also the strongest element disturbing adaptation of the expatriates. Even though all the foreign workers were well adjusted to their work, the lack of friends in the new location and missing family back home are common difficulties. Interaction with locals is considered very important both at work and at free-time and it influences the success of the adaptation to the new environment. Thus it affects all three dimensions of adjustment.

According to the findings of this study, Finnish people are typically described as friendly and helpful by the participants, which questions the stereotype of unfriendly and boring Finns presented by Tixier (1996). Many participants in this research find Finns easy to approach and perceive neighbors as a comfort factor. They are important because the expatriate families are in a new situation surrounded by a lot of unfamiliarity and don't have their supportive network from home around them. However, several mentioned that getting friends is a slow process and find it difficult. Even though they have people to socialize with, they perceive the relationships distant. This confirms the findings from earlier studies (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) including the difficulties in making new friends, establishing close and deeper friendships as well as challenges in keeping touch with the family and old friends back home as common factors affecting negatively on expatriate families. On the other hand, when the participants feel that they have got to know enough people and have friends, they feel comfortable. Thus according to this research, the interactional adjustment seems to play the biggest role in spouses' lives. And it is the biggest determinant of their overall adjustment.

### **5.1.3 Organizational factors**

The third group of factors identified in this study covers the aspects related to the employment status of the spouse as well as factors concerning expatriate's work adjustment. Since the expatriate's adaptation to his work is not the main focus of this research, the different factors related to it are grouped together in one theme. These have influence on expatriates' work adjustment whereas the employment status of the spouse impacts spouse's work adjustment or leads to a lack of it. The factors are listed in Table 10: Organizational factors including examples of participants' experiences related to each factor.

<b>Organizational factors</b>		
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
Employment status of the spouse	Unemployment / employment of the spouse	<p>“It has to be give and take because I quit my job and left everything for him to do this career”</p> <p>“I don’t consider myself a very good housewife at all, I don’t like housekeeping and I don’t really think I want to get good at it”</p> <p>“I don’t want to have a full-time job, I will leave that to my husband, I want to enjoy.”</p> <p>“I was pretty lucky, I managed to get a job after six months.”</p>
Expatriate’s work adjustment	Includes e.g. job satisfaction, organizational culture, efficiency at work and working hours	<p>“Work life has absolutely met and potentially also exceeded my expectations, I love my job it’s fantastic.”</p> <p>“So I have a long workday and I work between 10-12 hours a day so it’s quite a long week.”</p> <p>“it has taken me time to be ok with going home at 4pm”</p>

**Table 10: Organizational factors**

In the existing literature (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Black et al. 1991) organizational factors refer to directly job related factors and thus concern only expatriates in the families where spouses don’t work. In this research the setting is similar. Most of the spouses involved in this research were not working outside home. Further those who had a job, didn’t talk about it much in relation to adaptation. However, the findings of this study indicate that the shortcoming of the third dimension of adjustment, work adjustment, has an essential impact on many expatriate families in the form of unemployment. As Harvey (1995) states, the problems related to dual-career families are not found solely in the United States. Also in Finland most of the women work and according to several spouses interviewed for this study it turned out as a surprise how difficult it is to find a job. The spouses expected to get a job since the majority of the women work in Finland.

Several researchers have named the unemployment of the spouse as one of the biggest problems related to the relocation of dual career families and indicated that strong negative attitudes towards international relocations are formed if the spouse cannot find a job during the expatriate assignment. (Harvey, 1995) The findings of this study confirm this statement among part of the spouses either because of monetary reasons or personal desire to be involved in working life. However, if the financial status of the family doesn't require both adults to work, there is a high variety between participants' attitudes towards the importance of finding a job. For some it is of secondary importance, they had found other meaningful and preferable ways to spend their time such as hobbies and involvement in non-work organizations whereas for others not finding a job causes a major stress and negative feelings that prevent them from enjoying even the usually positive features of their lives. This highlights the importance of the organizations to find out the priorities of each family to be able to provide applicable support. For some other forms of support can be meaningless if the spouse does not get a job and for others it doesn't matter how they spend their time as long as they enjoy the things they do.

All in all, the problems related to dual-career family status are not the most prevalent in this study since over half of the participant spouses were not working before the international relocation or had decided not to work while on expatriate assignment. As Harvey (1995) points out, the cultural differences in gender roles weakens the impact of dual-career families. This can be seen also from the data gathered for this research. For several spouses the natural role was to take care of the children and/or home while their partner was working. However for other non-working spouses who had more freedom to use their time as they wished, the freedom caused guilt and the financial dependence from husband created frustration. These findings complement the current literature in respect to the negative factors related to the role of non-working spouse.

When viewing the organizational factors as related to expatriates' job, none of the difficulties mentioned in the literature (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Black et al. 1991) such as occupational or organizational stress were brought up by the participants in this study. All expatriates in this research had adapted well to their work organization and were satisfied with their job. This confirms the results of the study of Black & Stephens (1989) indicating that most expatriates were fairly well adjusted to their work. Many in this study mentioned that the similarity of the working

culture helped them in the adaptation at work which supports the statement from Black et al. (1991) about the influence the novelty of the organizational culture in the host country has on adjustment. According to Black et al. (1991) the more the organizational culture in the new position differs from the organization in the home country, the more challenging the adjustment process will be.

In addition to the influence the organizational factors have on the expatriate's work adjustment, several work related issues impact other areas of life as well and vice versa. Thus the factors of one dimension have influence on the other dimensions of adjustment and likewise the experiences of one individual impact other family members too. Consequently the effects family members have on each other's adjustment are discussed next.

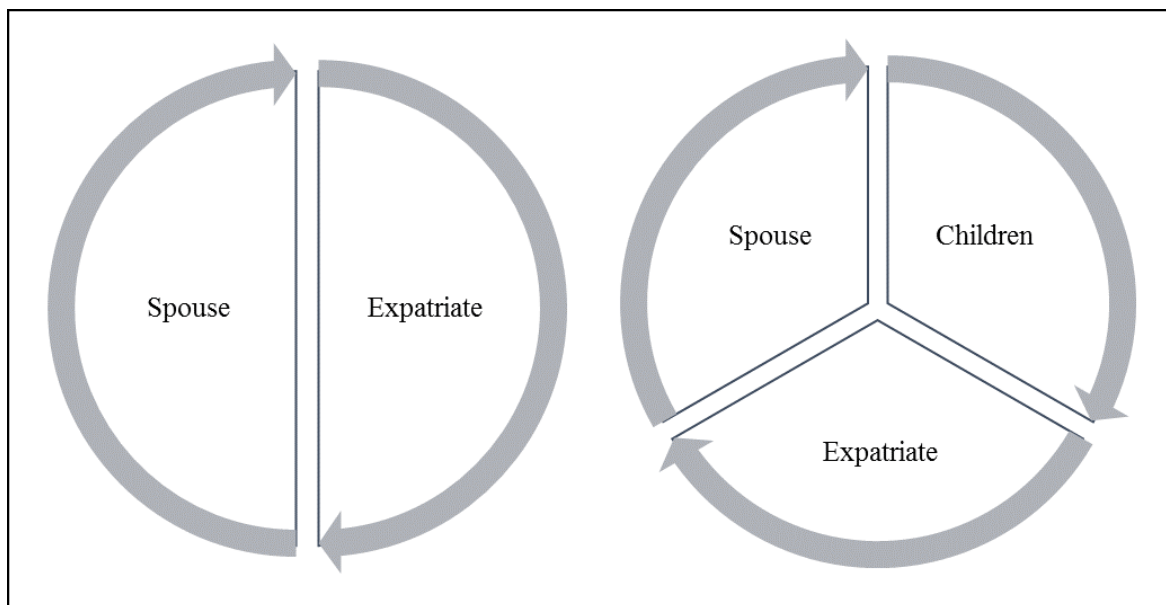
## **5.2 Members of a family influence each others' adjustment**

This study confirms the statement made by several researchers (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989; Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Andreason, 2003) that the adjustment of expatriate family is critical to the success of expatriate assignment in a foreign location. The findings related to the second research question: *How do the adjustment and satisfaction / dissatisfaction of the spouse affect the adjustment and satisfaction of the foreign worker?* elaborate the effects different family members have on each other's adjustment. Both the family systems theory and the crossover and spillover theories are supported by the findings of this research.

### **5.2.1 Support for family systems theory**

Family systems theory has been used to understand the cross-cultural adjustment process. Caligiuri et al. (1998) base their research on this theory to show that family characteristics including family support, family communication and family adaptability have significant influence on expatriates' adjustment process in a new environment. In line with the family systems theory, the findings of this study show that the members of an expatriate family perceive their family as one entity. They feel that they are adapting to a new environment and facing challenges together. The members are dependent on each other and interested in each other's wellbeing and happiness and thus the experiences and feelings of one person

affect others. The circular shape of patterns of interaction described by Minuchin (1985) is clearly evident in the findings. Figure 2: Circular patterns of interaction in families depicts this circular model of family dynamics shown in this research.



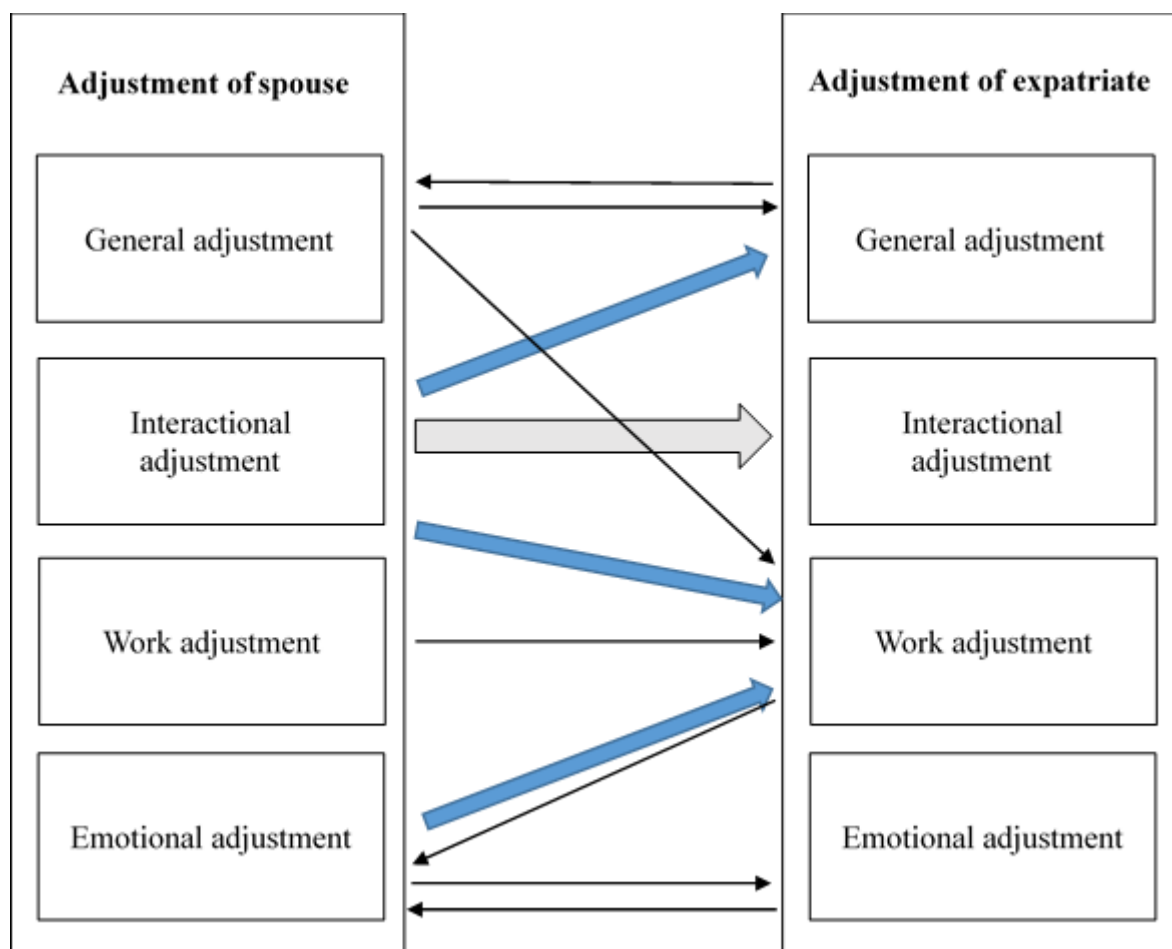
**Figure 2: Circular patterns of interaction in families**

The spouses put effort in doing their role at home to allow the expatriates to perform well at their job. As a response, the expatriates aim at fulfilling their spouses' wishes and expectations to help them feel good. Then again, the spouses avoid complaining too much because they feel that they are getting something back. Further, regarding expatriate couples with children, this study supports the conclusion made by Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) that following the circular pattern of interaction, spouses strive to support their children in the adjustment process. The spouses involved in this study spent a lot of time and energy to facilitate the adjustment of their children including solving problematic situations at school or with friends. As a result of this supportive behavior of the spouse, the expatriate don't have to worry about the children and he is able to concentrate on his work.

To conclude, since the family is seen as one entity the behavior, feelings and experiences of one family member affect other members. Consequently, the findings of this research support the family systems theory, but also confirm the crossover effects which will be discussed next.

### 5.2.2 Strength and direction of crossover and spillover effects

The effects in family systems between the expatriate, spouse and children that impact attitudes and behaviors and eventually to the success of assignment are termed crossover effects (McNulty, 2012; Takeuchi et al. 2002). As Haslberger & Brewster (2008) have established, crossover can impact the same dimension of adjustment in both individuals or have effects across different dimensions. Generally this research confirms the earlier findings of e.g. Caligiuri et al. (1998) and Takeuchi et al. (2002) proving that the influence spouse's adjustment and the adjustment of expatriate has on each other is strong. Consequently the findings of this study show that there is crossover effect between spouse's overall adjustment and expatriate's overall adjustment. What kind of crossover effects this study identifies in more detail, will be discussed next. First, figure 3 illustrates the different types of crossover effects in different dimensions of adjustment.



**Figure 3: Crossover effects between spouse and expatriate**

The three-dimensional model of Black & Stephens (1989) was used as a theoretical basis in examining the crossover effects. In addition to general adjustment, interactional adjustment and work adjustment, the findings of this study indicate a fourth dimension: emotional adjustment where crossover effect was identified. It refers to a person's capability to manage and cope with feelings. This finding confirms the psychological dimension indicated in the five-dimensional model of cross-cultural adjustment by Cerny and Smith (2007) (ref. in Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). According to their five-dimensional model the psychological dimension covers cognitive and emotional resources and skills.

Several spouses in this study had had difficulties in handling negative feelings caused by the new situation and unfamiliar environment such as frustration and anger. Many indicated that they are thus more emotionally dependent on their husband. The difficulties in spouse's emotional adjustment have negative effects on expatriate's work adjustment. The unhappiness of the spouse prevent the expatriate to enjoy his job to the fullest and reduce the efficiency at work. Further, the expatriates in this study expressed that they want to support their spouses and help them to feel better. When the expatriate himself is emotionally well adjusted, he is capable to figure out ways to support his spouse better. Similarly, emotionally well-adjusted spouses are able to support their working partners. This confirms the statement made by Harvey (1995) that spouses can provide types of social support including emotional support that cannot be replaced by any support services offered by organizations.

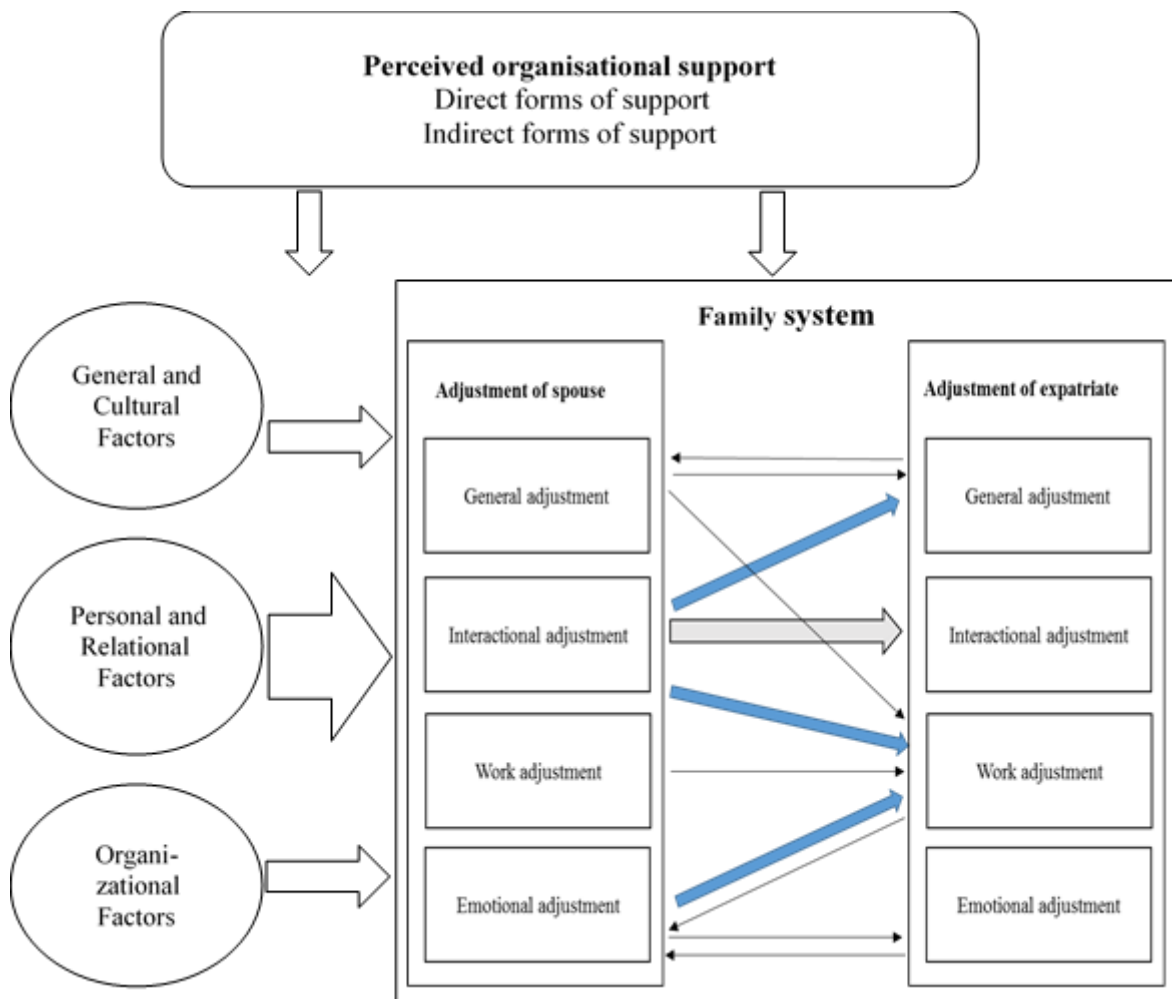
Furthermore, one of the most evident findings of this study related to support between family members is the spouse's contribution to expatriate's interactional adjustment. Most of the spouses facilitate the expatriate's social life on free-time and help them in getting friends. Also children and a dog as a family member support in interactional adjustment by offering possibilities to meet new people and have something in common with them. In addition to the strong positive influence of spouse's interactional adjustment on expatriate's interactional adjustment, the social ties of the spouse help in expatriate's general adjustment. Through the local friends, neighbors and other companion the spouse has, also the expatriate gets answers to location specific questions and chances to try local habits which help him in general adjustment. Consequently, according to this study, the family can be seen as a resource for the expatriate, especially in the domain of interaction and positive spill over to other domains.



Spillover effect refers to the impact the experiences and attitudes in one dimension have on other dimension (Takeuchi et al. 2002). The findings of this study show that the spillover effect from one domain to other does not necessarily work the other way round. For example interaction with locals is considered very important both at work and at free-time and it influences the success of the adaptation to a new environment. Thus it affects all three dimensions of adjustment or in other words spills over the other dimensions. However, good work adjustment didn't have spillover effects on interactional adjustment other than in the social ties with colleagues.

Most prominently the crossover effects are visible between all the four dimensions of spouse's adjustment and expatriate's work adjustment. This is explained by both crossover theory and spillover theory. Like Rosenbusch & Cseh (2012) have stated, many spouses bring up the work related stress experienced by the working partners which illustrates the spillover and crossover effect from expatriates' work to their home. The findings of this study are similar even though the stress was not brought up by the expatriates. In the families where the expatriate works a lot, the spouses feel sometimes lonely or they are disappointed to the lack of time together with their partner, especially in the cases where the expatriate doesn't have energy on free-time to do anything else than recover from work. Then again, if the spouse is happy, the expatriate can work comfortably whereas unhappiness of the spouse has negative effects on their working capacity. The expatriates are able to put extra effort to their work if they have a supportive and happy spouse at home. This confirms the statements from existing literature (e.g. Takeuchi et al. 2002; Ivancevich, 2007) that when the spouse adjusts well in a foreign environment she is able to support the expatriate better and that again has a positive effect on expatriate's performance.

### 5.2.3 Revised theoretical framework



**Figure 4: Revised theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework is revised to depict the findings of this study incorporated in theoretical basis drawn from the academic literature. According to this research, personal and relational factors have the strongest impact on adjustment. Further, the findings of this study support the family systems theory and confirm the impact of crossover and spillover effects. According to all of these, the feelings and experiences of one person affect those of other persons. Family members support each other in interactional adjustment, general adjustment and everyday-duties related to it, performance at work and overall happiness. The most prominent crossover effect is spouses support for foreign workers in interactional adjustment which has positive influence also on expatriates' general and work adjustment. However, it is not solely the family itself and the members of it who can facilitate the interactional adjustment or provide all the needed support for all members as indicated by

earlier research (e.g. Andreason, 2003; Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) and confirmed by this study. Organizations can also assist in all dimensions of adjustment process. By different forms of support, organizations can influence the adjustment of expatriate families and moderate or increase the effect different factors have on the members of a relocating family. The forms of organizational support are discussed next.

### **5.3 Benefits and potential of organizational support**

The third research question: *What forms of support can organizations provide to improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses?* is the most practice oriented. The findings related to it complement the existing knowledge of beneficial forms of organizational support. According to earlier research (e.g. McNulty, 2012), practical support is often criticized. In this study, the participants gave only positive feedback about the organizational support they had received, but named also services they would find beneficial, but didn't get.

As noted by Ivancevich (2007), companies offer compensation packages for expatriates to help them in the adjustment process, but other forms are usually more important. In this study, the monetary compensation was mentioned by few participants. When it was perceived too low, it was not possible to have the same standard of living as before the move which made the expatriate family feel less cared for by the organization. The feeling of being or not being cared for is a central outcome of the other forms of organizational support as well. This confirms the theory of perceived organizational support presented by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002). According to the theory, individuals tend to consider organizations as humanlike beings who either like or dislike them (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This was visible in many participants' experiences in this study. One participant used for example the following expression when she felt she was not liked or cared for: "I think as the spouse it would just be nice throughout the process for people to show that they actually cared about me or acknowledged that I was coming along" Then again, when the person had received adequate organizational support from the company, he or she felt that the company cared like one of the participants described: "It did feel like that the people at work and in Finland were ready to do whatever they needed to which again made a big difference."

All in all, the expatriates and their spouses are happy and thankful for the support they have received. All the forms of support influence the individual's perception of how much the organization values them, and according to the findings of this study, a contact person is a central contributor to the participants' perceived feeling of being cared for. The participants described that a personal destination consultant made them feel like they were cared about and it was perceived important. For many it was the most important factor to have a contact person who understands their situation and is able to help with versatile matters specific to their needs. It also offered a possibility to ask stupid and personal questions. This type of support was not clearly listed in the forms of support presented in earlier studies (Andreason, 2003; Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) and thus the finding complements existing research.

All other forms of beneficial organizational support the participants received or would have liked to get according to this study are in line with the ones listed in the literature (Andreason, 2003; Harvey, 1995; Ivancevich, 2007; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). Good experiences related to help with administrative paperwork and finding a house are the most commonly cited support services in this study. They reduce stress and enable successful international relocation like Harvey (1995) describes adequate support. Help and support in finding a home is valued most of all the forms of organizational support that the participants have received. Home is seen as a comfort zone, a place where a person feels safe and familiar. The help in finding the right kind of comfortable place to call home is highly appreciated by the participants but also the practicalities related to rental and local knowledge about locational factors.

Further, according to this study, there is a lack of two essential forms of organizational support, namely career assistance for spouses and help in getting involved in groups and clubs. The lack of career assistance is the most obvious shortcoming in the support services offered to expatriate families involved in this study. Even though it is not relevant for all families, it can be critical to those who need it. The career assistance should include proper prior knowledge of the possibilities for spouses to work in Finland, support in finding a job, information and practical advice on entrepreneurship and freelancing and other alternative employment models as well as support in networking. In addition to career assistance the spouses would have needed help and support in interaction related aspects. Any kind of help

in getting to know local people or other expatriates and making friends is found vital by the spouses involved in this study. This could be executed for example by companies organizing events for spouses or directing them to different activities and hobbies. A few spouses had experienced this kind of support provided by their husband's employer and found it very beneficial. Facilitating involvement in groups and clubs as well as offering career assistance for spouses are also examples of acknowledging the spouse.

Since, according to the literature support for the spouse and the whole expatriate family contributes to employee's job satisfaction, reduces family/work conflict and increases the well-being of individuals (Harvey, 1995), it would be important for companies to offer these kind of services to expatriate families. Further practical implications are presented next as well as suggestions for future research offered.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

This study contributes not only to the theoretical literature on cross-cultural adjustment and family dynamics related to it, but has also business relevance. The lived experience of expatriate families is described using qualitative research approach. The findings from this study confirm the importance of adjustment and satisfaction of foreign workers' spouses and complement the earlier research. Extending the existing literature the results of this research present that spouses' adjustment is influenced by several factors such as cultural differences, language skills, motivation, social activities and change in employment status. Furthermore, organizational support has strong influence on the success of adaptation. Thus this study provides insights for HR personnel about the current level of support for expatriate families and suggests improvements. In this chapter the managerial implications including recommendations for employers as well as suggestions for further research are offered.

### **6.1 Practical implications**

The third research question: *What forms of support can organizations provide to improve the adjustment and satisfaction of spouses?* is the most practice oriented and the findings related to it were discussed in the previous chapter. All in all, the findings emphasize the importance of perceived organizational support meaning that the companies should aim at creating and maintaining a feeling that the whole expatriate family is being cared for by the

organization. This includes taking the spouses into consideration and offering support services specific to their needs. All the forms of support influence the individual's perception of how much the organization values them, and according to the findings of this study, a contact person is a central contributor to the participants' perceived feeling of being cared for. Thus the companies should pay attention to designating a destination consultant or other type of support person to assist and support each individual expatriate family instead of solely offering predefined compensation packages and sending tick box forms to relocating families about desired services. The destination consultant or other contact person should serve as a comfortable individual who the expatriate family could consult and ask for help in the issues specific to their individual needs.

In addition less formal support networks should be established. The findings of this study highlight the importance of an informal contact to ask for help in minor problems or personal issues. Many found vital to have a person whom to ask the stupid questions. The companies could arrange "buddy" or mentor programs within their own organizations to enable each expatriate family to have another family or individual to ask help in everyday related issues and to share experiences. It could be beneficial to have one local contact to offer local knowledge and practical advice but also another expatriate family to allow the relocating persons to discuss their experiences with someone who understands both sides of their situation. These kind of buddy or mentor services would increase the mental support for the expatriate families in addition to practical help. Further they would help in establishing social ties and getting involved in social activities.

Interactional adjustment is the most important of the three dimensions of adjustment according to this research. There is a lot the companies can do to facilitate interactional adjustment of the expatriate families – especially the spouses since many of them don't have the social network of colleagues and other people from work. First, companies could organize events and meetings for expatriate spouses. These informal free-time events would allow spouses to meet each other, share contact details and discuss their experiences. Several spouses expressed that their experiences or difficulties are unique, something that they believe has happened only to them or that the negative feelings they have felt are exceptional. Even the one event where the focus group discussions for this study were conducted was found very beneficial by the participants. They expressed relief when they noticed that many others have faced same kind of issues and had similar feelings. In addition they had a

possibility to meet other like-minded persons or individuals who had knowledge specific to their needs. The wish brought up by many was that the events would have continuity to enable longer term relationships or at least a possibility to meet for example twice a year.

Second, to help the spouses to get to know people and have social activities, organizations could offer possibilities to participate in hobbies, groups and clubs. This type of support services could include encouragement to get involved in activities, providing practical information about available hobbies and other interest groups and courses as well as organizing these kind of activities for expatriate spouses. The findings indicate that the spouses find it easier to get to know new people when they can do something together like cooking, photographing, walking with dogs etc. Similarly the moms of small children expressed that they would like to know about and participate in events with kids such as morning coffee and play dates. Any kind of services that support interaction would help spouses to network, establish social ties and integrate into the new culture. After participating in arranged activities, people tend to agree dates by themselves, start inviting each other for a coffee, dinner or parties and after a while the support may not be that relevant anymore.

Third, according to this study, there is a lack of organizational support related to spouses' employment including help in applying for jobs and other kinds of career assistance. These are the most obvious shortcomings in the support services offered to expatriate families involved in this study. Even though it is not relevant for all families, it can be critical to those who need it. Consequently, the companies should offer proper prior knowledge of the possibilities for spouses to work in Finland, support in finding a job, information and practical advice on entrepreneurship and freelancing and other alternative employment models as well as support in business networking. In addition a service that would connect foreign job seekers with companies who want international employees is suggested. Further, organizational support should not be limited to paid work but include also assistance in getting involved in voluntary work, apprenticeships, unions and communities. For many, work is important for other than financial reasons such as to keep busy, feel appreciated, have something meaningful to do and to give back to the society. Thus companies should include this kind of support to the services to facilitate the adjustment of spouses.

Fourth, the findings of this study indicate factors of which proper prior knowledge and practical guidance to deal with those factors would help in adjustment process. For example the influence of weather is strong. It is a factor determining how a person feels. Sunny and warm weather makes happy whereas darkness and harsh weather has negative influence on individuals' general and interactional adjustment. Naturally, the weather is a variable that cannot be influenced. Yet the weather conditions can be described to expatriate families so that they know what to expect. In addition companies could provide practical guidance on what to wear and provide recommendations about the coping behaviors for winter time such as exercising, having enough rest and taking vitamins. Several mentioned that the first winter was the worst and then they learned what to expect and how to cope with it. Thus the companies should prepare the expatriate families better for the first winter.

To conclude, the companies should keep up the good work they are already doing by offering a wide range of support services for expatriate families. The findings of this study indicate that all the support, the participants received is beneficial. The most important forms are related to housing and administrative paperwork. However, as indicated, there are still many additional ways the companies could help expatriate spouses to adjust in a new environment. When planning and offering further support, the individual needs of each family should be figured out and taken into consideration. Above all, the companies should show that they care about all the individuals in expatriate families instead of solely relocating employees. This will pay back eventually since the family contributes to employee's job satisfaction and productivity at work as well as the overall success of the assignment. In the end, expatriate can feel comfortable like one participant of this study described: "We have friends here, I have a job that I enjoy, we have a nice place to live and we have everything that we need. It feels good -- this feels like home now"

## **6.2 Suggestions for further research**

Finally, suggestions for further research are presented. The first suggestion relates to the chosen method. As this study was done using qualitative approach with face-to-face interviews, a broader understanding and more generalizable results could be achieved by a quantitative study on larger population. Thus one suggestion for further research would be to conduct a survey on foreign workers' spouses about the factors affecting their adjustment. This kind of research could identify the most common factors influencing the adjustment of



expatriate spouses and increase understanding of the relevant forms of support related to them.

The second suggestion relates to the sampling decisions. As this thesis was done due to a request made by Finland Relocation Services Oy Ab Ltd, the interviewees consist of individuals that have used FRS's services. Thus all the participants had received organizational support for their adjustment. To investigate the most vital forms of support, it would be beneficial to study expatriate families who have not received any support services and thus indicate what kind of organizational support the participants would have needed most in their adaptation. Further, a comparative study between expatriate families who have received support services and those who have not could be conducted to identify the advantages of organizational support.

Third, future research could concentrate on specific forms of support separately and evaluate the effect they have on spouses' adjustment. For example research on career assistance for spouses would offer more insights to this topic since none of the participants in this study had received job related support services. Similarly for example a case study about an effort in engaging spouses in social activities would increase the understanding of the effects that kind of support would have on spouses' adjustment.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Background information - Foreign worker**

Foreign worker

#### **Background information**

Name (is not identifiable in study results):

Nationality:

Age:

How long have you been together with your spouse?

Children and their ages:

Did you work before the expatriation?

Prior international experience (if any)

Had you visited Finland before the assignment?

Did you know someone in Finland before moving in?

Were you satisfied with your life before expatriation plans?

What was your motivation to move to Finland?

## **Appendix B: Background information - Spouse**

Spouse

### **Background information**

Name (is not identifiable in study results):

Nationality:

Age:

How long have you been together with your spouse?

Children and their ages:

Did you work before the expatriation?

Do you work now?

Prior international experience (if any)

Had you visited Finland before the assignment?

Did you know someone in Finland before moving in?

Were you satisfied with your life before expatriation plans?

What was your motivation to move to Finland?

## **Appendix C: Individual interview guide - Foreign worker**

### **Interview questions**

Q1: Can you tell me about your life in Finland? What is it like?

- job/home
- free-time activities
- friends

Q2: Could you describe how your expectations were or were not met after moving into Finland?

Q3: Can you describe your own adjustment in Finland?

- general
- work
- interaction with locals
- examples of positive experiences and difficulties

Q4: How do you feel that your spouse has adapted to Finland?

- How is it visible in your everyday life?
- How does it feel?

Q5: Could you describe how your spouse's feelings affect to your satisfaction and adaptation in Finland?

- Can you give examples of that kind of situations?

Q6: Can you give examples of the factors that made your adjustment into the new environment easier?

- Were these helpful to your whole family?

Q7: Can you describe issues you considered difficult in the adjustment process?

- how did you overcome these?
- did your company play a part in helping you to overcome these difficulties?  
How?

Q8: Can you describe what kind of organizational support/assistance you received?

- employer
- relocation services

Q9: What else could organizations do to help you and your spouse to adjust?

- practicalities
- interaction with locals
- general satisfaction

## **Appendix D: Individual interview guide - Spouse**

### **Interview questions**

Q1: Can you tell me about your life in Finland? What is it like?

- job/home
- free-time activities
- friends

Q2: Could you describe how your expectations were or were not met after moving into Finland?

Q3: Can you give examples of points of satisfaction in your current situation in life?

Q4: What kind of difficulties do you face in your everyday life in Finland?

Q5: How do you see your role as a spouse of a foreign worker in a new country?  
- How does it feel?

Q6: Can you describe differences between living in Finland compared to your home country/culture?

Q7: Can you describe how you have adapted to living Finland?

Q8: How do you feel that your satisfaction/dissatisfaction affects to your spouse?

Q9: Can you give examples of the factors that made your adjustment into the new environment easier?

- practicalities
- strengthened self-confidence
- interaction with locals
- similarities with home culture

Q10: Can you give examples of situations where you felt insecure or needed help?

Q11: Can you describe issues you considered difficult in the adjustment process?

- how did you overcome these?
- how did this impact on your adjustment process?
- did your spouse's company play a part in helping you overcome these difficulties?,How?

Q12: Can you describe what kind of organizational support/assistance you received?

- spouse's employer
- relocation services

Q13: What else could organizations do to help you to adjust?

- practicalities
- interaction with locals
- general satisfaction

## **Appendix E: Focus group interview guide - Spouse event**

Your experiences and opinions about moving in Finland and adjusting in living here are valuable for my study. I would like to discuss with you about **1) the most important elements that helped you to adjust or the matters that prevent the adaptation to Finland as well as 2) how do you feel this affects your husband?**

### **Guiding questions**

Q1: Could you first briefly describe your normal weekday in Finland? What is it like?

- job/home
- free-time activities
- friends

Q2: Can you describe how you have adapted to living in Finland?

- culture
- interaction with locals
- work

Q3: What made your adjustment into the new environment easier? Can you give examples?

- practicalities
- interaction with locals
- similarities with home culture

Q4: Can you describe issues you considered difficult in the adjustment process?

- how did you overcome these?
- how did this impact on your adjustment process?
- did your spouse's company play a part in helping you overcome these difficulties?,How?

Q5: Can you describe what kind of organizational support/assistance you received?

- spouse's employer / relocation services

Q6: What else could organizations do to help you to adjust?

- practicalities
- interaction with locals
- general satisfaction

Q7: How do you see the adjustment of your husband?

- culture
- interaction with locals
- work

Q8: How do you feel that your satisfaction/dissatisfaction affects to your husband?

- Do you do something or avoid doing something to help your husband to feel good in the new environment?
- Can you give examples?